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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["SIT DOWN, MY DEAR!" SAID THE GREAT MAN, GRACIOUSLY. "WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS?"]

NOEL LORD ARDEN.

CHAPTER VII.

FIVE shillings is not a large sum!

Far be it from me to despise or undervalue the comforts to be purchased by the now rarely seen crown-piece, or by its modern equivalent, two half-crowns. I know, I think, as well as any one, that much valuable work can be accomplished by five silver shillings; but for all that I maintain that they present but a slender protection when they are the sole barrier between their possessor and starvation.

Nell Briarley did not faint or scream when she discovered the theft practised on her. She just leant back in the shabby cab as one who has just received a sudden blow. There was something more pathetic, to my mind, in her blank silence than in the noisiest lamentations. It is something when our hearts are sore to be able to cry out, to have

some one friend at least to whom to carry our grief, but Nell's sorrow had not this consolation. Of what use for her to cry out? There was no one to hear or to sympathize. If she ordered the cab back to Waterloo and made a formal complaint to the officials, what would she gain? The thieves had got off with their spoil. Even if she met them now, this very moment, face to face, what proof had she against them? Sovereigns, alas! have neither number nor individuality; there was nothing to distinguish the ten which had made up her little fortune from hundreds and thousands of others. They were lost. She should never see them again. All that remained was to do without them.

Nell tried hard to think as the cab jolted her over the stones. At least, the thieves had had some ray of pity; they had not left her quite penniless. She could pay her driver and have a shilling or so left. Her attire was respectable, and the two well-filled boxes would inspire confidence, so that it was hardly probable her future landlady would insist on being paid in advance. She had only just decided this in her own mind when

they turned briskly round a corner and entered Prettyman-road.

It was not a cheerful locality, this place where she had first seen the light. Nell thought it must have been a very pleasant change for her mother when she turned her back on it and went to Milby, with its glorious ruins and ever-changing sea!

She did not make allowance for the eighteen years during which Prettyman-road had been steadily degenerating; and could not guess that, long ago, it had been a quiet, genteel thoroughfare, with quite a rural air. The cabman here claimed her attention by inquiring where he should stop; and Nell, peering out, discovered quite half-a-dozen cards of apartments within easy view, and alighted to seek for a domicile, leaving her luggage under the Jehu's care.

The search did not take long. Prettyman-road was a hive of workers. The lodgers were for the most part shop-girls, dress-makers' assistants, and female clerks. Such people are not free very early in the evening, so there seemed nothing suspicious in a



"young person" seeking apartments between nine and ten.

Her story that she had come from the country endorsed by her weary air, her two boxes, and the cabman seemed plausible enough, and a bargain was soon struck by which Nell became the proprietress of a back room for five shillings a week, to include such attendance as an occasional scrub and the cooking of such luxuries as a rasher or a red-herring.

Dinners Mrs. Hobbs objected to, most of her lodgers being away from morning till night. She let the kitchen fire out in the middle of the day. This was no obstacle to Nell, whose limited resources would certainly not run to anything more extensive than a sausage-roll, a bun, or any other cheap luxury purchasable at a baker's, and consumed on the premises.

So everything was settled; the boxes brought in, and Mrs. Hobbs, who was kind-hearted, if untidy, sent up her biggest girl with a "bite of bread and cheese," that the new lodger might not go hungry to bed.

Nell shut the door and looked round her, gazing on the first independent "house" she had ever known with eyes full of tears.

Ah! me, it is often the happiest moment of a girl's life when she first sees the home of which she is to be sole mistress. One usually connects the idea with a bride just returned from her honeymoon, and shown all over her little demesne with fond pride by an adoring husband.

But, alas! all home-comings are not like this. It may be the orphan whom death has robbed of the parents' care, and who is forced to "sist for herself." It may be the friendless one on whom loneliness is forced. Coming to "one's own home" are not always sunshine.

Nell glanced round the little room through her blinding tears. It was small, shabby, and inconvenient, and yet she thought in the girl's heart was how long should she be able to afford such a shelter. But for the chance of discovering Trucoat Palmer's infidelity at Thorpe she would now have been safe at the Rectory, receiving a kindly welcome from Lady Emily, and trusted with the care of the little children.

It seemed hard to little Nell. England was so wide. So many places were open to Mr. Palmer; so many people would have made him welcome. Why must he choose the very spot where she had hoped to live? Why drive her from the only spot that had opened to her.

She gave a little smile as she reflected the stir her non-arrival would make, and how Lady Emily would write to Mrs. Maitland and to her cousin at Claxby for particulars of the missing girl. What would they all think? Mrs. Wyndham, who had treated her like a child of her own. Mark, who had bid her think of the Grove as a home always open to her. Wouldn't both believe they had been shamefully deceived?

"Yet the world can't be all hard," thought poor Nell, as put out the candle, "or there wouldn't be such kind people in it as Mrs. Wyndham and Nan. I like to think of her as 'Nan,' though she is married and a great lady, and I'm glad she gave me her likeness. It will remind me of that night, and how kind she was to me."

"They were all good to me," thought the little wail; "even the servants were good to me, and the housekeeper told me that tall gentleman—Lord Arden, she called him—had saved my life. I almost wish he hadn't, only that it is wrong and ungrateful. What a kind, brave, face he had! I can see it now, just as it looked when I came to myself, and saw him tending over me in the moonlight. He never seemed to remember that he was an Earl, and I nothing but a little, homeless wail. I wonder what his home is like, and whether he is married! I should think his wife must be a very happy woman," and with that thought,

which, somehow, did not bring her happiness, Nell closed her weary eyes in slumber.

The waking up was hard, but yet not hopeless; somehow things mostly look brighter to us when seen under the morning sun. Nell decided, as she made a hasty toilet, that the little room could be made very cosy and home-like, and Mrs. Hobbs really was a kindly-spoken woman.

She went out directly after breakfast, carrying a small parcel, for she felt that even before seeking work she must obtain a little ready-money for her immediate wants. It is the fashion to represent all those who earn a living, by purchasing the treasures of the poor as hard-hearted and avaricious, but this case proved an exception, if such be the general rule.

Nell found an honest-minded, civil-spoken jeweller, who, while he condemned the trinkets she showed him as old-fashioned and out of date, yet gave her their fair price by weight as old gold. With three sovereigns in her purse, Miss Briarley felt better able to face the world, and turning into a stationer's shop, she purchased a daily paper.

There are hundreds and thousands of women, who, at some time or other in their lives, have searched with cruel anxiety the advertising columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, who have felt as though their sole hope in life, their one dream of an honest livelihood lay on one of those brief paragraphs commencing with the magic word "wanted." Full many people were "wanted" on this bright autumn morning, and Nell began to feel quite hopeful as she bought pen, ink, and paper, and hurried home to write her letters.

For a whole week, morning after morning, she continued her patient quest, and never an answer came to her; though the postman passed up Frettyman-road half-a-dozen times a day, he never brought a single letter for the girl who was Mrs. Hobbs's latest lodger.

When she had paid her little bill, and saw what a hole even her frugal board had made in the jeweller's sovereigns, Nell gathered courage, and asked Mrs. Hobbs if there were any other means of seeking employment than through the papers.

The landlady stared at her a little, and asked civilly, "What kind of work do you want? There's mostly an opening for single girls, but you look out above that."

Nell shook her head. "I would do anything that was honest," she said simply. "I have answered more than thirty advertisements since I came here, and nothing has come of any of them."

"I don't suppose anything 'd come of it if you've wrote a hundred letters," returned the landlady, kindly. "It's a pushing world, my dear, and those that can't fight go to the wall. You should have gone to see the people."

"I never thought of that."

"It's the only way," said Mrs. Hobbs, decidedly. "Folks who have work to give away can find plenty of people for it; they don't need to write letters and make appointments, which would only take up their time for nothing. If you want a place, don't answer any advertisements but one you're quite suited to; and then, instead of writing, call at the place, and refuse to go away till you've seen the people. That's the way."

As far as Nell's inclinations went it was the most unpleasant way that could have been suggested, but want is a hard taskmaster; so, instead of setting down to letter-writing, she dressed herself carefully, and went away to apply personally for any post mentioned in the paper.

There were very few advertisements that day, which simplified the matter.

Nell would have felt puzzled had two chances offered her, one due east and the other west; but, as it happened, the only thing which struck her as at all likely was the following.

"Young ladies of musical talent are invited to apply to the undersigned any morning before twelve. Experience unnecessary. Salary at once."

The name and address followed. Anyone more worldly-wise than Nell might have distrusted the advertisement from its very plausibility. She, poor girl, was delighted with it.

From babyhood she had been musical. She could play from memory any tune she had ever heard; and her voice was so clear and sweet. In Mr. Dale's time she had led the choir at Milby church.

Then, too, most delightful variation from the general run of advertisements, there was no mention of references; and the comforting fact was stated that experience was unnecessary.

Nell felt more hopeful than she had done since the moment she recognised Trucoat Palmer's voice in Mrs. Maitland's drawing-room.

She had been quite ready to lay aside her pride and serve in a shop had it been necessary; but, lo! the shops would have none of her, and certainly it would be far pleasanter to teach music and sing in church than to serve exacting customers with stationery and calico.

Nell never dreamed the real nature of the advertisement. She knew so little of the world, poor child; and she had been searching the papers so short a time. How was she to tell that this same notice, under different wording, appeared as often as once a week, so that either the "young ladies of musical talent" were remarkably hard to find, or an extraordinary number of them were required.

It was her first attempt at a personal interview, and she felt terribly nervous as she addressed a shabby youth who opened the door (it was a private house in one of the streets leading from the Strand to the Embankment), and asked if she could see Mr. Whyte respecting the advertisement.

The youth, whose party face was ornamented with several ink-patches, and a choice collection of freckles, looked her up and down as though she had been a natural curiosity before he consented to reply.

"He's out now. You can come in and wait, if you like."

Nell did like. To her surprise there was no crowded apartment for the desirable employments.

The office, for such was evidently the use of the room into which she was ushered, had a dingy, forlorn aspect, and its only occupant beside the freckled youth and herself was a young man of perhaps five-and-twenty—a pleasant-faced individual enough, and with something about him which gave Nell a strange sense of security. She wished with all her heart he had been Mr. Cecil Whyte; she should not have been afraid of him.

They waited twenty minutes, then the gentleman turned on the freckled youth sharply.

"Look here, how much longer will Mr. Whyte be? You told me ten minutes, and I must have been here more than half-an-hour."

"He won't be long."

"Can't you go and hurry him? My time is precious, and so, I daresay, is this young lady's."

Freckles consented to go and see, and Nell found herself alone with the stranger.

He looked at her attentively for a moment, and then asked,—

"Pardon me, but am I right in thinking you have come about this advertisement?" taking it from his pocket.

"Yes."

"And you know no more than the paper tells?"

"Nothing. It sounds very nice."

"Oh, it sounds charming!" a little impatiently. "In fact, a friend of mine was so delighted with it she wanted to rush up here and see about it; but I don't like it, so I thought I would come myself and make a few inquiries for her."

"It was very thoughtful of you."

"Well, I know London pretty well, and

very often these plausible advertisements turn out anything but trustworthy."

"Why don't you like this one?"
"It promises too much, and is far too vague. Besides, indirectly, I am not alone in my caution. If the advertisement had been genuine, we should have found dozens of young ladies here. 'Musical tastes' are a qualification possessed by six people out of ten. No; depend upon it, there is something queer. The regular workers know the man and keep clear of him. It is only the young and inexperienced he decoys."

"Oh, I hope not!"

Mr. Moselle looked up quietly.
"You must forgive me if I seem impertinent, but you are here all alone; you have, perhaps," noticing her deep mourning, "lost your father, and so it seems kinder to warn you. Don't have anything to do with this fellow Whyte unless he gives you references."

Nell looked troubled.

"But if I ask him for references, won't he demand mine?"

Hubert smiled.

"That's merely a form; he wouldn't really trouble your friends by inquiries."

"But," she blushed crimson, "I am a stranger in London. I only came from the country a week ago, and I don't know a creature here."

Some men might have distrusted her on hearing this; Hubert did not. Young as he was, he had great skill in reading faces. He knew that she had told him the simple truth.

"I may be mistaken in Whyte, but I own, this delay makes me the more suspicious. I shall not let Nina have anything to do with him."

"Your sister?"

He smiled.

"She is not my sister, but I have known her for years, and she has no elder brother of her own. She is the eldest of a family of ten. Her mother is a useless, fine lady; her father never contrived to get on; her next sister can do nothing but pose as a beauty, so things come pretty hard on Nina. She wants to earn a little money privately, and so I have made her promise not to answer any advertisement without consulting me."

"Is she young?"

"Eighteen last birthday."

"That is just my age."

He smiled cordially.

"I hear Mr. Whyte coming. I think you had better see him first."

"But you are in a hurry?"

"Yes, but I fancy he will tell you a very different story from what he does me, and it might be wise for us both to compare notes. There is an excellent confectioner's in this very street if you will go there and begin eating a bath bun. I fancy I can join you before you have finished. No, don't thank me," as Nell began some timid words of gratitude, "it's nothing at all. What's a man good for if he can't help a young lady?"

"Mr. Whyte is in now, sir," said Freckles, civilly.

Mr. Moselle glanced at Nell.

"This young lady will see him first," and then he sat down so determinedly that the youth had no excuse, and was forced to usher Miss Briarley into a small inner room which Mr. Whyte had probably entered from the landing.

Nell's heart sank. Just as Hubert Moselle's face had inspired her with trust, so did Mr. Whyte's repel her. There was nothing objectionable about his appearance. He was a well-dressed, well-preserved man of forty, with a complexion a little too florid, and a shifty expression about his light eyes; but it was the tone of his voice and the familiarity of his manner which made Nell feel certain she could never feel happy in his employment.

"Sit down, my dear!" said the great man, graciously. "You wished to see me about the advertisement. What are your qualifications?"

"I can sing and play. Will you please tell me what more is required?"

He looked at her admiringly. Nell's beauty was unmistakable, and of the type which is realized at first sight. People who knew her forgot her face in her sweet voice and gentle ways, but the impression produced on strangers was always the same—"how lovely!"

"Gently, gently," said Mr. Whyte, "I make no doubt we shall get on admirably. Have you ever sung before in public?"

"I used to sing in the choir at church."

"Just so. And you are not nervous?"

"Not in the least."

"And I suppose you can dance?"

"No."

"That could be acquired; a few lessons would make you all right. Let me hear you sing?"

She sang two verses of an old ballad; the great man nodded approvingly.

"I think we may consider the business settled. Call to-morrow, and I shall have the agreement ready to sign. Thirty shillings a week. Contract terminable by a week's notice on either side. Fee, half the first month's salary."

Nell looked bewildered.

"But you have not told me what I am to do?"

He explained then he was engaging a band of chorus-singers for a West-end theatre (he did not say which), where opera bouffe prevailed. All that would be required of her was two hours' attendance every night, besides rehearsals. Costumes, etcetera, were provided by the management; and then telling her he should expect her the next morning at eleven, he bowed her out, subsequently taking care she made her exit by the opposite door to that which led into the office.

Nell's mind was quite made up—she would never go near the place again. Not if it came to starving would she take employment from that man, whose coarse admiration had filled her with horror, or exhibit herself night after night in the extremely pronounced and scanty uniform worn by the chorus-singers. She was well into the mysteries of her Bath bun when Mr. Moselle joined her.

"Will you come into the Temple Gardens. I want to speak to you? It is just as I thought," he said, "a swindle from beginning to end. There is such a piece, and I believe he does supply the chorus-singers by contract, receiving thirty shillings a week from the management for each. He takes as his commission half the first month's receipts, and none of his luckless protégées remain beyond five weeks, so that he makes a handsome income out of their labours."

Nell shuddered.

"Even if you had not told me I meant never to go back to him—he was horrible!"

Hubert undertook what she left unsaid.

"I can quite believe it; but, tell me, had you any idea of going on the stage?"

"Not the least. I never dreamed that was the meaning of the advertisement."

"I expected it from the first. I fear you are terribly disappointed?"

Nell sighed.

"It was foolish of me to build so much on it; but I have been in London a week, and it was the only work I seemed to have a chance of."

Hubert looked at her attentively. He saw that she was beautiful; but there was nothing but pity in his observation, for the young man's heart had been given away long before this meeting. He was sorry for Nell. Honestly, sincerely sorry for her; but her beauty had nothing to do with it.

"What will you do?"

"I don't know!" Then trying to rally her courage, "I suppose I must go on answering advertisements."

"And you have no friends?"

She shook her head, wearily.

"I am quite alone in the world. I came to

London because I thought it was the best place to earn my own living, but—I hate it."

"And where are you living?"

"At Clapham."

"How strange!"

"Why! Do you live there?"

"No! but Nina does. Her father moves very often. I can't think why, for it must be very expensive. He took a house in Prettyman-road only last Michaelmas."

"Why, that is where I live!"

Mr. Moselle looked at the girl and hesitated. Looked again, and decided those clear, truthful eyes could not harm his Nina.

"It must be terribly lonesome for you. Would you like to know her? She is not rich, or fashionable, or anything of that sort; but she is very gentle, and anyone who knows her learns to love her."

"But—"

"You are thinking you are a stranger to her. Well, don't you know the best friends in the world were strangers to each other once? I will write a little note, and if you take it any time this afternoon you are sure to find her at home."

Nell was not privileged to read the note, but she may do so. There was nothing in it to betray the terms on which Hubert and Miss Watts stood. In point of fact, Nina herself did not know that she was the star of his ambition. She had been intimate with him for years—had grown to take all her difficulties to him as to some elder brother; but she never dreamed that Hubert, who had known her in short frocks and white pinafores, counted the months till he thought himself rich enough to ask her to marry him. Just as she never guessed it was for her sake he bore so patiently with her mother's querulousness, her father's bad spirits, Judy's impertinence, and the noise and clatter of the eight children who, to save trouble and breath, were mostly spoken of by the girls by one short and comprehensive title, as "the fry."

Nina was feeling particularly dull and out of sorts on this bright autumn day. To begin with, Lady Nora had been to see them only the week before, and had carried off Judy on a long visit.

Nina did not grudge her sister the pleasure, and she thought Lady Nora simply the sweetest woman she had ever seen, but her mother's conduct bewildered her. Deferential almost to servility in the guest's presence, she spoke of her when she had departed with such malice and animosity as dumbfounded her husband and horrified Nora.

She told the whole household and anyone else who would listen that Judith was provided for, never more would she return to poverty and hardships. She was to be Lady Arden of Arden Court, and as such would provide bountifully for her family.

Considering Judy had never even seen the man her mother spoke of as her husband, there was something a little coarse and unwomanly in Mrs. Watts' boasting. Even her husband, who rarely interfered in domestic matters, ventured on a remonstrance.

"Wouldn't it be as well, Katy, not to talk of it just at present?" he said, dubiously. "You know Lord Arden may have other views. It's not every man cares to marry a portionless girl even when she's as pretty as Judith."

Mrs. Watts drew herself up the very picture of offended dignity.

"My daughter Judith will be Countess of Arden, and she will own her good fortune solely to me. She might have lived in this poky Clapham all her days before her father gave a thought to her future."

"That's unkind, Katy," said the promoter of companies, sadly. "Heaven knows there's not a day but I think of all your futures, not one's more than another's; but a man can't coin money."

"Well, you need not try any longer, thanks to my discrimination."

"But my dear, even if you are right, and

Lord Arden faucies our little girl, I shouldn't care to live on my son-in-law. Besides, I have ten children, and one of them finding a rich husband won't provide for the other nine!"

He went off to his companies, and Nina wished sincerely her work carried her likewise away from home, for her mother's song of triumph was very irritating.

Mrs. Watts, in her usual low spirits, was trying, but in this ecstatic state she was hardly endurable. Besides, she seemed to have lost all prudence, all thought. She wanted to run long bills on the strength of Judith's prospects. She seemed suddenly indined with the most extravagant notions, and told Nina, with charming frankness, that as soon as her sister was Lady Arden she must drop all "low acquaintances like Hubert Moselle."

"He is not low," cried Nina, eagerly, "he is a gentleman, and has been a true friend to us for years."

Kathleen looked provokingly indifferent.

"He is a mere clerk in a lawyer's office, a most unfit associate for my daughters."

"We have owed all the pleasure we ever knew to him," retorted Nina, forgetting filial respect in her honest indignation; "and I don't mean to forsake old friends for new ones."

Mrs. Watts bathed her forehead languidly with *eau-de-cologne*, sighed sweetly, and answered,—

"You will make me really ill, Nina, if you persist in this noisy talk. Draw the blinds down, and bring me a cup of tea; and then, if you kept the house quiet, I think I could sleep a little, and try to forget your undutiful conduct."

Nina made the required arrangements for her mother's comfort, and went downstairs.

The children were out for a long walk under the charge of the little servant, so that when she had closed her mother's door Miss Watts was practically alone. She had a good deal to think about, and though her fingers moved swiftly backwards and forwards as she darned the boy's socks, the holes were filled up mechanically, for Nina's mind was very, very far away from dilapidated garments.

She really could not understand her mother. Till a few weeks ago Mrs. Watts had been easy to comprehend. She and Judith were the ornamental members of the family. So long as they had the best of everything there was to have, the lion's share of such comforts as came to the house—so long as no work was expected of them—they had both been fairly amiable inmates; but from the day when Mrs. Watts made her lonely pilgrimage to the City all seemed changed. Instead of leaving all the management to Nina, who had been housekeeper for years, the mother was interfering. Nina and her husband seemed the special objects of her anger, since they could not enter into her faith in Judy's brilliant prospects. She indulged the children, ran into debt as far as she could, never ceased to grumble at the homeliness of her surroundings, and, in fact, made home such a very unrestful place that the promoter of companies spent as little time there as possible.

Nina had not this relief. Her work lay at home, and it was seriously augmented by her mother's strange moods. Like many needy families, the Watts's possessed very few friends, but nearly all the few they had were driven away by Mrs. Watts's incivility and arrogance. At this juncture only Hubert Moselle remained faithful; and Nina, who had not a grain of coquetry in her nature, never guessed it was for *her* sake he bore so patiently with her mother.

Gladly would the young clerk have spoken out and become Nina's *fiancé*, but his means were small. Although far richer than Mr. Watts, since he did possess a regular income, and that an increasing one, he knew that he should have difficulties with Nina's mother. She had never cordially liked him, and his proposal would give her three distinct grounds of offence. First, that a "mere clerk" should

aspire to *her* daughter; second, that Nina should presume to be engaged before her beautiful sister; and last, but not least, the fact that Nina was the patient bond-slave of the whole family; and her marriage must throw at least a part of her work on Judith and Mrs. Watts.

So Hubert kept silent. He saw Nina often, and knew he could trust her. If he proposed he risked being forbidden the house. Then came Mrs. Watts's exalted mood and Judy's departure followed by a confidence from Nina. Could he tell her of any way by which she might earn money. Father had been so unfortunate lately, and mamma was so unhappy.

Hubert knew the girl too well to propose any sham industry, which should simply mean putting money into her pocket from his own by means of any innocent subterfuge. He gave the matter his honest consideration, and finally suggested she should copy deeds at home; but Nina was quite as honest as himself. She told him that with eight children rioting in every room in the house it was impossible to keep to any settled work there. She would suffer a positive nightmare for fear dirty little fingers converted valuable documents into tails for kites or other juvenile delights. Her idea was music. She was a fair performer, and could teach it well, or if any such a thing be discovered, she might go every afternoon to read and play to a blind lady.

The matter did not seem very hopeful to Hubert, but he promised to do his best, on the single condition that she accepted no employment without consulting him.

This afternoon Miss Watts was expecting the postman. Hubert knew too well to present himself too often in Prettyman-road during the present state of Mrs. Watts's temperament, but there was a certain afternoon post due soon after three o'clock, by which Nina decided she might get just a line from him. Her disappointment, therefore, was great when the postman walked deliberately past the house, she felt quite sick at heart when she noticed a girlish figure in deep mourning turn the handle of the gate, and turn slowly up the steps.

"A mistake, of course," thought Nina. "Someone for the last tenant; but I had better open the door before the knock wakes mamma."

She found herself face to face with a girl of her own age, who looked at her with a yearning entreaty in her large blue eyes, and asked wistfully,—

"Are you Miss Watts?"

Utterly bewildered, Nina answered "Yes," and a small note was put into her hands.

"A gentleman gave it to me," explained Nell, simply. "I do not know his name, but he said you were a friend of his, and would advise me."

Nina took her into the deserted parlour, and sat down to read the letter.

It was, perhaps, the first time in her life she had ever been alone with a stranger of her own age.

Nell's face had touched her heart. Besides, Hubert had sent her. There was no jealousy in Nina's nature. Hubert was her faithful friend, and he had asked her to help someone more friendless than herself; besides, his note made her happy.

"MY DEAR NINA,—The thing is a swindle out and out. I do wish you would put the idea of working out of your head. I shall be a rich man some day, and then—Meanwhile I want you to do a kindness. This note will be brought you by another victim of the high-sounding advertisement. She is a stranger in London, and wants to earn her own living. I fancy she has as much idea of worldly wisdom as your favourite cat, and a little womanly sympathy will do more for her than money, even if she were in a position to accept alms. I don't know her name, and I have only seen her once, but I thought you would do her good.—Yours ever, H. M."

Nell's first impulse on putting the letter

away was to remove her visitor's jacket, the next to pour her out a cup of tea from the little black teapot on the hob, then she said kindly,—

"I think we are companions in misfortune. You can't think how much I had hoped from that advertisement. I want to earn money so much, for my father is poor, and there are ten of us."

"And I wanted work. I have been answering advertisements a whole week, and I can find nothing."

"Poor child!"

"I am eighteen," said Nell, simply. "I feel just like an old woman."

Nina smiled pityingly.

"That is because you are tired and unhappy. It will all be quite different when you have found a situation."

And then came a friendly talk. The one girl had been brought up in an incessant struggle for daily bread—an endless tugging to make both ends meet—the other, until lately, had always had sufficient for simple wants. The one knew all the shifts of poverty; the other was only conscious that she had no money, and must earn some or starve.

"What could you live on?" asked Nina, the practical. "I mean, how little would keep you? We won't say comfortably, but just till you found something better?"

Nell did not know. She paid five shillings a-week for rent, and she wanted very little to eat. It was postage that swallowed up her funds. Nina had to think for her.

"Mr. Moselle told me if I would undertake copying he could get me as much as I wanted, and that I could earn from ten shillings to two pounds a-week at it, according to how much time I had. Do you write a clear hand?"

Nell signed her name in pencil. Nina saw a clear, bold writing, as easy to decipher as print, and she looked delighted.

"Then we have solved the difficulty very easily if you are not afraid of hard work."

"But!" Nell blushed; "is it not taking it from you?"

"I could never write at home. The children don't leave me ten minutes alone unless they are out-of-doors. And I should worry myself almost into a nervous fever lest any accident happened to any of the deeds entrusted me to copy. Let us say you earned at first a pound a week. You could just live on that. You would have no expense, for Mr. Moselle comes here once a week, and as you live so near he could bring you the copying and take it away when finished."

"But that would be troubling him!"

"Hubert doesn't mind trouble. He and I have been friends for years. He is better than a brother."

"But you have brothers of your own?"

"Nine brothers and sisters. My mother is very delicate, so there is a great deal to do."

"How kind it is of you to help me!"

Nina smiled.

"I have done little enough. I suppose we mustn't think it quite settled till I have written to Hubert. It will be a dull life for you, Miss Briarley, I am afraid; but it may do till brighter days come."

"I think my bright days are all over," said Nell, sadly. "Mother's dead, you know!"

Nina decided, rather undutifully, Mrs. Briarley must have been very different from our own mother if her loss was to cloud her daughter's whole future. Then she stooped down and kissed Nell's face.

"I should like us to be friends!" she whispered, "for I never had a girl friend before."

"I will be your friend always," answered Nell, "and shall never forget how kind you have been to me."

And the promise was kept. These two were staunch friends always. Even in the dark days that came all too soon, when a heavy shadow hung over the one, the other never doubted her, but trusted in her, despite appearances with a perfect faith.

(To be continued.)

DRIVEN TO WRONG.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.—(continued.)

BUT Mr. Hilhouse still believed in Samuel Biggs, and said so plainly, nor would he listen to the idea of his dismissal. So Cecil held his peace, for it was no time for disputes or differences of opinion; and he, like the rest, was softened towards his father. And Biggs remained at his post, with his seedy black clothes, his very tall hat, partly covered by a very broad band, bow, and streamers, a cumbrous scarf over one shoulder, and his staff of office in his hand, with his lantern-jawed, sallow, flabby face drawn down to its utmost length, and most woe-begone expression; and there Samuel Biggs remained in undisputed possession until the sad obsequies were over.

One thing the Rector could not refuse, little as he personally liked it—the exquisite flowers which were laid upon the top of that rusty black pall, and well nigh hid it—the offerings of the friends who had so dearly loved, and venerated the dead woman.

All, should in Mr. Hilhouse's opinion, be black, and he thought even the pure white blossoms, Heaven's love gifts, were blots upon these mournful occasions.

But the others touched the flowers with gentle hands, because she had ever loved them, and because each one spoke of the affection of the sender, whether it was the villager's humble posy, or the wreaths of rare exotics from those in the upper grades of society.

The churchyard was crowded with real mourners, and many, indeed, were the tears which bedewed the grassy mound, thickly covered with floral tributes of affection, which alone remained to show to mortal eyes that a sweet and gentle woman had once existed, and now was not!

Cecil Hilhouse remained as long as he could at the Rectory; his sorrow lightened by Elsie's love, and shared by her with tender feeling.

Before he left home it was settled between them that their marriage should take place the following February, and their engagement be made public at the New Year; and that, in the meantime, Cecil should make arrangements for the reception of his bride, and Elsie for the approaching wedding, and the giving up of her pretty home.

"Are you sure you don't mind leaving it, Elsie?" he asked one day of her, and she had raised her truthful eyes to his.

"If we could have shared it, Cecil, I should like to have kept 'The Nest,' but, even then, I should have wanted to place it on wheels, for I think we shall be better out of Market Glenton. But, as long as I am with you, love, I care little where I live. For, Cecil, from henceforth you are my home, and not the roof which may chance from time to time to cover me!"

"Thank you, my one love!" he murmured. "Elsie, I hope I shall make you happy; but I am keenly aware how unworthy I am of such a woman as you are!"

"There are two opinions upon that subject, dear!" she answered, softly. "And I am sure mine is the correct one, as your angel-mother shared it with me."

"My darling!" he replied, tenderly, "I feel so glad that it was she who brought us together again; it will always throw a halo upon our reunion!"

"True, Cecil. And I would rather receive you back from her than by any other means, though I confess I should have thanked his satanic majesty himself, had he brought you back to me," she said, with a happy laugh.

"My naughty little darling!" he returned, "let me punish you," and he drew her to him, and pressed his hirsute lips to her coral ones. "What a speech for a parson's future daughter!"

"Well, perhaps it was more suitable for a soldier's future wife," she admitted, with a smile.

"You certainly had me there, pet!" he laughed. "I think it was. But, Elsie, I want to tell you something which I hope will please you, but which certainly does not please my father. My poor mother's money comes to me, to his exclusion. It is not much, but it will be a great help to us, my darling!"

"Really, Cecil? I should have thought poor Mrs. Hilhouse would have left it to him for his lifetime," said she, with surprise.

"She could not do so, Elsie. It was bequeathed to her by my late aunt for her life, and at her death it was to pass to her eldest child. I am that individual, you see, and therefore I inherit it. My father cannot blame my mother, little as he may like the fact."

"He is well off, is he not, Cecil?"

"Far more so than the world imagines. He has ever lived very much within his means. Had it been otherwise I should, with your consent, have let him have the interest while he is among us. As it is, he really does not need it, so I think we may as well enjoy it ourselves. What do you say, little one?"

"I say it is your own to do what you like with, dear."

"Oh! do you? Well it won't be so long, for I shall very soon bestow upon you all my worldly goods."

"Ah! I shall get the pull there," she laughed, "for I have no such rash promises to make. It will be a case of what is yours is mine, and what is mine is my own. All I shall give to you, Cecil, is myself."

"And what more could I want, Elsie, darling?" he whispered, as he drew her into the shelter of his arms, and pillowed her head upon his manly breast.

But even lovers cannot manage to be always together.

The work of the world has to go on even though people are making love, and so Cecil found.

His leave expired, and he had to return to Gibraltar, and all the household at the Rectory missed him greatly.

Soon after his departure Elsie Charlton announced the necessity of her returning to "The Nest"—a proposition which was greeted with anything but pleasure by those around her. But although she did remain a little longer, she stuck to her text for various reasons.

First, she had many things to arrange and see to before her marriage; secondly, she wanted freedom for the sending and receiving of Cecil's letters; and, thirdly, she thought it would be better for all her friends to get back into their regular groove of home duties, instead of making her the centre of all they had to do, as helper, and adviser, and go-between.

Every simple request which the girls had to make to Mr. Hilhouse was brought to her, that she might submit it to him, and he seldom said her nay.

All her old influence over him seemed to have returned twofold, and he did his best to prevent her leaving the Rectory; and, for the first time since his wife's death, showed temper at her decision against his wishes.

But that had not the faintest effect on her. Had she remained it would have been for Marion's sake, but she set that straight by obtaining permission to take her to The Nest with her.

Poor Marion!

She had heard of the falseness of her lover. She knew that he was now engaged to the stylish and handsome daughter of the Bishop.

She did not wonder at her choice; but she did wonder, with a dull, aching heart, how he could thus have changed—how proved so untrue!

And yet deep down in her spirit she loved him still; no longer with hope, but in a sad, dreary and unalterable fashion, knowing that no change or ease could come to her aching

heart. She received the news of his engagement as the incurable patient hears the verdict which tells him that so long as he lives, suffering is to be his lot in life; and the "incurable," after the first sharp agony of mind, is generally patient, and so was Marion. She never railed against Mr. Gresham, although he had spoiled her life.

The idea never entered her mind that she might get over his desertion, and fill his place with one more worthy.

There are few men or women who love as Marion loved—still there are a few.

She was very glad to go to "The Nest" with Mrs. Charlton, although every room, every garden walk there, was haunted by the recollection of Faulkner Gresham, and filled her with memories of her once happiest thoughts, but now her most painful ones.

Marion, with love's intuition, had seen how it was with her friend and her brother, and was very glad; her own sorrow having in no way contracted her sympathies. Her love, given so freely, had been wasted upon Mr. Gresham; but if it had not enriched the heart of him to whom she gave it, it returned back to its spring, and ennobled her character with a greater depth and sweetness.

Longfellow wrote:

"Talk not of wasted affection; affection never was wasted.

If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters returning,

Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment—

That which the fountain sends forth, returns again to the fountain."

And so it was with gentle, true-hearted Marion.

She was kinder, more loving and affectionate, to every sufferer upon the face of Heaven's earth, because she herself suffered.

Yet she could enter into their joys, for she had known joy herself, and did not grudge happiness to others, because her own was a thing of the past.

"Welcome, Marion darling!" said Mrs. Charlton, as she threw her arms round her friend's neck, when she reached her home. "I am very, very glad to have you here with me, dear girl!"

"And I am more than glad to come; the Rectory will never feel to me like home again, now that the spirit of my blessed mother has left us," she answered, with tears welling to her dark eyes.

"Poor girl!" said Elsie, softly. "But, my dear! think how long she had suffered, and how much she needed her rest! You must try not to wish her back, Marion."

"Yes! for her sake! but, oh! Elsie, it is such a cruel blank for me and Nell."

"And Cecil."

"No, it is not so bad for him. He has you, Elsie, and I want to tell you how glad I am."

"Oh! so you have found us out, friend Marion, have you? Well, then, you must keep our secret, for it is not to be told until the new year."

"No one shall hear it from me, dear!"

"Does Nell know?"

"I think she is too much taken up by her own double trouble. Do you think Elsie, papa, will ever consent to her marrying Laurence? I quite thought, from what our dear mother told us, that he would do so; but he has not said one word, and Nellie is fretting dreadfully. Don't you think you could ask papa about it?"

"Yes, certainly; but it is early days to trouble him yet, Marion. I had no idea he would have felt your dear mother's death so fearfully."

"No, nor had I. Poor father! I am afraid I thought he had no heart, but he seems like a ship without a rudder now she is gone.

think, although she never obtruded her opinions, or showed her power, her gentle spirit must have influenced him. He has been leaning on you since she died, poor darling!"

"These are your new thoughts of him,

dear!" said Mrs. Charlton, sensibly. "He has lost his balance now, but he will soon regain it; and in a year or two you will find that your father is as assertive as ever. A leopard does not change his spots, remember; and though our natures may be turned into fresh channels, they seldom alter. So make the most of your father's unusual softness while it lasts."

"Then now would be Nell's time," returned Marion, with a smile. "I shall tell her what you say."

"Do, if you like, but add that I don't think she ought to bother him just at present. In her place I should wait three months."

"Then will you ask him, Elsie?"

"Yes, if she is afraid to," she laughed, and led Marion upstairs to take off her hat and wraps.

CHAPTER XXIX.

INTRACTABLE NELL!

GLAD as Elsie Charlton was to get back to her own home, there was one who appeared still more rejoiced — her faithful friend Trusty.

His joy knew no bounds. He rushed from room to room with loud barks of delight, challenging his mistress to join in his demonstrations of pleasure by every means in his power.

But Elsie, fearing to hurt Marion's feelings by an exhibition of joy, only smoothed and patted his glossy head and smiled at him.

The past few weeks had been trying ones to Trusty, for, although Mrs. Hilhouse had insisted upon his coming to the Rectory, both mistress and dog were perfectly aware that he was considered in the way, both by the Rector and his sister, the latter of whom would draw her silk skirts aside with both words and gestures of disgust, if they chanced to come in contact with the sleek coat of Elsie's favourite.

Mrs. Hilhouse, knowing that he had been her son's pet, was fond of him, and would have him up into her bedroom, where Trusty would lie as quiet as a mouse, with his great eyes watching her and Mrs. Charlton, fully, apparently, understanding the situation; and when Cecil came back his joy was great, but he showed it by no noise, seeming to be aware that he must make none; so sagacious are the canine species.

Trusty was very quiet during his visit to the Rectory, but he was not fond of quietness, and he was right glad when it was over, and he might bound, and jump, and bark once more.

Elsie, too, enjoyed the freedom of her own home, and began many small devices for making Marion brighter and better.

Many were the letters which were posted at Gibraltar and Market Glenton during that probation season, and none of them failed in giving pleasure.

So time went on until Christmastide, at which period it had been settled that Nell should speak to her father about her engagement, and if she was not successful, Mrs. Charlton was to intercede with him.

It was when they were preparing the Christmas decorations for the church that Nell decided to say what was in her heart; so she went to her father's study with an armful of holly and a flushed, excited face.

"Papa," she said, hurriedly, "may I decorate your study for you? Rose wanted to do it, but I have got here first, you see!"

He looked up in surprise, for it was not his custom to go in for any such vanities, which he asserted were relics of heathen rites, although he gave way to public opinion as regarded the church, in a subdued fashion, but the adornments this Christmas would be of a very different class to what they had been the year before, under the auspices of Mr. Gresham.

"You know I don't care about such things,

my dear," he said, a little sharply, "so pray don't trouble."

"It is no trouble; and, besides, if you don't care for the holly, you do for Rose, and she says she must do as she likes her first Christmas in England."

"So you decide to cross her by doing it yourself!"

"Oh, no! I didn't look at it in that light; only I wanted to decorate it for you; but I won't be selfish—I'll leave it for Rose."

And she laid her greenery upon a distant table, and stood waiting, and an awkward pause ensued.

"Do you want anything?" he asked, at length.

"I—yes; I did want to speak to you," she faltered.

He had taken up his pen to write, but now he laid it down again, and gave her his attention.

"Ah, I thought there was something at the bottom of the holly," he remarked, and waited, in no way helping her to make her confidence.

Since the death of his wife Mr. Hilhouse had been like a fish out of water.

He had made his daily grumblings and complaints to her, and she had smoothed down all the sharp corners of life for him, and now as every turn they annoyed him.

He had never realised how much she had done for him until the things she used to do for his comfort ceased entirely.

Mrs. Charlton, seeing how it was with him, took some pains to make the wheels of his establishment run more smoothly, and to place a few pads upon the most noticeable corners.

But when she was gone he felt the full brunt of them with a sense of absolute wonder and astonishment, and acknowledged that his present life was altogether unbearable, for he was not a man who could brook trouble or annoyances, having so long had his own way, in his parish and home.

As to the parish, Mr. Gresham had entirely disorganised it. His congregation were no longer to be led like lambs; they had found out that they were a thinking people, and would not allow Mr. Hilhouse to be their mentor as of yore.

The household was no longer the well-ordered home, where all he wished was accepted as a matter of course, but a roof-tree under which he found wifal and troublesome servants, and many other elements which he had not the patience to try and combine into harmony as his wife had done.

So he retired often into his study to think out the problem again, and again, coming to no real or definite conclusion; and now it was evident to him that his daughter Nellie was going to be troublesome!

"Don't put it like that, papa," she pleaded. "In truth I have been expecting you to speak to me ever since we lost dear mother, about Laurence, but, as you have not done so, I had better tell you that she led me to believe you would retract your refusal to our engagement; and, oh, papa! I hope—I do hope that you will!" she cried, earnestly.

He regarded her with astonishment. "I never gave your dear mother any such promise, Ellen; and she was too truthful to have asserted such a fact without foundation," he said, sternly.

Poor Nell coloured hotly. She was a warm-tempered girl, and had been kept under, solely by her mother's gentleness.

"Do you think that I would insinuate for one second that my mother could do wrong?" she cried, while an indignant gleam shot from her eyes.

"I wish you inherited your mother's disposition, Ellen," he answered, coldly.

"So do I," she replied, subdued by the thought of her gentleness and endurance.

"Never through our thirty years of married life has she replied to me as you venture to do."

"I was wrong," she acknowledged, impul-

sively; "but, father, you do not understand me, and mother did. She could do anything with me with one word."

"You are drifting from your subject, Ellen. My time is valuable. What is it you have to say to me?"

"Papa, I want you to consent to my marrying Laurence Travers. I love him with all my heart, and can never be happy apart from him," she said, with her bright, eager face looking down into his. "Oh, father, mark Christmastide with this kind act, and you will never regret it!"

"All that is very romantic, Ellen; but I have no right to permit you to walk into the fire because it is cold weather and you feel sure it would warm you. I know better; I know it would burn you; so I do not accede to your request. You think you would be happy as Mr. Travers' wife. I know what poverty is, and that when it enters the door love flies out at the window; and I can see the dangers which you overlook. Therefore, as your best friend, I still refuse. Nor is the young man's position such as I should desire for that of my son-in-law."

"But, papa, why should I not be allowed to be happy in my own way? It cannot hurt anyone else if I am poor. We do not ask you to assist us, remember!"

"Assist you!" he repeated, indignantly; "it would assist me if you and Marion made good matches in the county, as you ought both to do, being my daughters; but as to my offering to enable you to marry so foolishly, with the heavy expenses lately incurred, and the loss of your mother's fortune, which so unjustly passed into her son's hands instead of mine, the thing is absurd!" he exclaimed, hotly.

"It is not my mother's fault," retorted Nell; "she did not dispose of her money; she only had a life interest in it, and surely you don't grudge it to Cecil?"

The Rector was strangely angry at the remark, for it hit him hard. It was really the truth, that he did actually grudge Cecil this money, and, in point of fact, Cecil had fallen into decided disavour with his father.

First, for opposing his wishes with regard to Rose D'Arcy; secondly, for having inherited what he deemed should have been his own; and there was a thirdly in his mind, which he had scarcely yet put into shape, but which annoyed and irritated him in a dull, shadowy way which he could barely account for, even to himself. He did not approve of his son's friendship for Mrs. Charlton!

Why he had not probed sufficiently to find out, but he determined to put a stop to the intimacy, if possible.

Mr. Hilhouse did not approve of friendships between the opposite sexes. He had said so all his life. He had asserted it from the pulpit, in classes, in public, and in private. He had never had a lady friend himself, until Mrs. Charlton came to Market Glenton.

She might be called one, for she had been in and out of his house at all hours, and had been on decidedly intimate terms with him. He smiled as he settled that subject; and, little as he approved of such friendships, he appeared to derive satisfaction from the assurance he gave himself that he and Mrs. Charlton were friends on very intimate terms!

He remembered, with a glow of pleasure, and almost triumph, how she came to break the news of his wife's death to him. How she had led him into the study with gentle hands, and knelt by his side, her own eyes wet with tears, and told him all the details of the passing away of the wife who had so long served him faithfully. And how, in the outburst of sorrow which followed her announcement, she had soothed him, pressing her lips to his brow, in sympathy, ere she left him alone with his trouble.

Elsie thought no more of the act than of caressing Trusty, but the Rector took a very different view of the case. He thought the kind young widow's interest in him decidedly out of the common, so unaccustomed was he

to women and their ways, outside his own home; and he constantly brought Elsie's kindly deeds up before his mind's eye for inspection, and every time he liked the look of them the better. And all this was in his thoughts when his daughter brought her accusation against him with reference to her brother.

"You are very impertinent, Ellen," he said, with a dusky red overspreading his face, which made him strongly resemble his sister. "You sadly want the guidance of a mother—sadly. I really do not know what to do with you. I will talk to Mrs. Charlton as to the best method of dealing with so intractable a girl. She is a sensible woman, and, perhaps, may be able to advise me. There, take away that rubbish, and leave me in peace! I cannot really attend to you any longer!" and he turned determinately to the table, and began to write.

Nellie's face brightened when she heard that Elsie Charlton was to be consulted. She had not fathomed her secret and Cecil's, and she was a partizan of Rose's, whom she desired for her sister-in-law; but she admitted the little widow vastly, and believed in her good influence over her father, remembering many of her victories over him, gained in her own quaint and fascinating way; and was content to leave her interests in her hands.

She felt that she had not managed the interview with her father well, that she had not made a friend of him; in fact, she had never been able to look upon him as a friend.

Of all his family, Nellie was the most impatient of his faults; perhaps because she had a dash of his temper herself.

"Father," she said, "I haven't meant to be cross. I haven't meant to vex you; but I have felt it so much, your parting me from Laurence!"

"If that is your only trouble, Ellen, you will not hurt. However, I am glad you regret your conduct—it is the first step in the right direction!"

"But, father, had your engagement with mother been refused, could you have been happy?" she asked, passionately.

"Ellen," he replied, with severity, "had you chosen wisely, as I did, your engagement would have been sanctioned; and when you do choose a suitable mate, you may be sure I shall not say no to you."

"When I choose!" echoed Nell, her cheeks and eyes aglow. "Oh! father, how can you speak so? I have chosen, and I love Laurence, and shall never change."

"There, that will do, Ellen. Kindly go away now," said her father. "I highly object to sentiment and scenes!"

And the girl did go, in a very bad temper, loudly slamming the door behind her, to the extreme indignation of Mr. Hilhouse.

CHAPTER XXX.

"MARKET GLENTON SHALL RING WITH YOUR
PERFIDY!"

The morning of Christmas Eve broke clear and bright. King Frost had taken possession of the land, and reigned in right royal fashion, his kingdom being studded with myriads of diamonds of his own making, which glistened and glistened in the cold sunshine, festooned with silver flagstones work of the rarest cunning—a very prince among jewellers was King Frost! Not one uncomely design did he make out of even the simplest materials!

And Elsie stood at her window, admiring his handiwork, with a happy smile upon her face. Her garden was a perfect fairy scene! The bushes and trees were fringed and tasselled with silver; the frosted spider's webs, festooned between, like tendrils of delectably spun glass. The grass a smooth surface of unbroken purity, while the holly-berries peeped from the snow-laden branches, and the red-breasted robin sang its morning carol,

giving a touch of colour and life to the still winter scene.

The postman entered the gate, and went away smiling; for Elsie never waited till Boxing-day to make her Christmas gifts, and a letter from Cecil was brought to her by the butler, accompanied by a note from the Rectory.

That she tossed upon the table, and settled herself by the fire to enjoy the former. It was all she expected; it breathed of hope, of love, of faith, and truth, and the sweet face which bent over it spoke of her full contentment.

Then she arose and answered it, while Trusty lay by her side watching her; and when she had finished, she ran upstairs, calling to Marion to ask if she would accompany her to the post-office. And the two girls came down dressed in their winter furs, with stylish hats, which suited them admirably; Elsie having laid aside her widow's bonnet some time before. Both their eyes fell upon the unopened note, which Elsie had forgotten.

"Oh, dear! I must see what the Rector wants before we start, I suppose, Marion," she said, picking up the black-bordered envelope, and breaking the adhesive; and running her eyes over the contents of the letter, she continued, "He begs us both to come and help with the church decorations to-day, old lady, and that's natural enough; but here is a funny request," and she read aloud, "I wish Marion to come home and bear her sister company this evening, for I have a matter I am most anxious to consult you upon, and desire to do so in private. I will therefore walk back with you from the church whenever you are ready."

"It is about Nell!" said Marion, decidedly.

"She told me they had had a passage of arms over Laurence, and he had stated his intention of referring the matter to you."

"Highly flattering, I'm sure," laughed Elsie. "Well, I'll do my best for Nell, rest assured. I like to see everyone happy, and she is Cecil's sister; so doubly do I desire to see her so."

"I'm sure of that," returned Marion, softly, while a dreamy look settled in her eyes; "and Laurence Travers is worthy of her. I like him very much."

"Well, we will return to luncheon, and devote our afternoon to the holly wreaths. We shall not be allowed anything more elaborate, I suppose, this year."

"Oh, dear, no!" replied Marion, with a faint smile, and the two went out together.

They called on Dr. and Mrs. King, to give them the season's greetings, and found the doctor had just returned from going his foot-roads, while his dog cart was at the door, waiting to whirl him away to visit his more distant patients.

"Well, Mrs. Charlton," he cried, merrily, "I need not ask how you are? You have been using Nature's rouge-pot this morning. Fine crisp air, is it not? Splendid weather for everyone except the doctor! Nobody could presume to be really ill such a Christmas as this! I tell my patients they are all charming, everyone of them. A happy Christmas, my dear little lady! Who could help it, whose conscience is clear, even if they haven't a good wife and 'bonnie bairns' like mine, and a dinner fit for an alderman in prospect to-morrow? You'll dine at the Rectory, I suppose? But if you don't, it would add to our pleasure if you will join us here—either alone or with our friend, Miss Marion, who is looking all the better for your care of her. I believe you're a better doctor than I am, after all, Mrs. Charlton!"

"I ought to look better after all her kindness to me, doctor," returned Marion, gratefully. "You can't think how good she is to us all!"

"Yes I can; but I wish she would carry it a little further with one member of the family," he said, meaningly.

"What an impatient creature you are,

doctor," answered Elsie, with a saucy, half shy look. "Don't you know that everything comes to the man who waits, and good luck comes in with the new moon, or the new year—I quite forget which—but I'll tell you on the first of January, if you will call. So mind you come!"

"You're very kind! I'll make a note of it. And is Mrs. King to accompany me or no?"

"Do you think I should invite you without her, you vain man?"

"Well, I don't know," he laughed, "ladies can't always keep secrets. So, if this be one, perhaps I had better leave Mrs. King at home!"

"Really, John!" cried Mrs. King, "you're altogether too bad! I can bear to have the palm of my hand tickled ever with a feather, and that is a sign of being able to keep a secret—now, is it not, Mrs. Charlton?"

"I've always heard so; but I shan't want mine kept then, you see."

"Then let little madam accompany me by all means," he said, generously. "And now come to-morrow if you can, and you will add much to our happiness."

"I don't think there is much chance of my being able to do so, but I'll let you know."

"Then good-bye, and may your Christmas be a happy one!" and the good doctor jumped into his dog-cart, and drove off at a rapid pace.

The old church, with its modern improvements, looked very pretty with its simple wreaths of holly and evergreens twisted around its massive stone pillars, and lining many of its arches; and the season was a plentiful one with regard to red berries, which made it all look bright and pleasant; for the rarest flowers are not more prized than the simple brilliantly adorned branches, which come to us with such hardihood in our darkest days of winter.

Nell had whispered to Elsie the story of her conversation with her father, and was rejoiced to learn of the coming interview, hoping great things from it.

Rose D'Arcy was fluttering about the church like a butterfly, apparently ubiquitous, but, in reality, doing very little work, although making much show. She carried her wreaths to the Rector for praise, as a child might do, and he gave her more than her fair meed of it, while but little fell to the lot of his daughters.

Trusty, with strange instinct, had walked into the church, and taken possession of the pew of his mistress, where he lay without making a sound or movement, and probably no one but Elsie knew of his presence there.

Mrs. Charlton had set herself a certain task to do, and, having completed it, she informed Mr. Hilhouse that she was ready to go home. And, having asked Marion to return as soon as she could, as she had ordered supper for her benefit instead of dinner, for which she feared she would not be in time, she left the church with the Rector by her side, and Trusty in close attendance.

It was already dark, and the stars were coming out one by one, dubly bright in the frosty air, and she thought of how Cecil had walked home with her under the stars just one year before, and all that had happened since, both of joy and sorrow.

Mr. Hilhouse was unusually silent, so she said little to him, her mind being filled with her absent lover.

When they reached the house he stood for a moment in the doorway, looking into the cosy dining-room.

"Come, this looks homelike!" he said with satisfaction. "I am now going to leave my troubles out in the cold, Mrs. Charlton, and enjoy your kindness. I see you are going to indulge me with a cup of tea, and there is nothing I should like better!"

"That is right," she answered, cheerily. "I'll make it at once, and it will be ready by the time I have taken off my hat. You will excuse me while I do that, won't you?"

"Pray make no stranger of me," he answered. "We know each other too well for any formalities."

"Of course we do. Trusty will bear you company."

But the dog didn't see it in the same light, and begged permission to accompany her upstairs.

However, Elsie did not allow him to be rude to visitors, so he had to shake hands with the Rector and remain with him.

Mrs. Charlton soon bustled down again, and took her place at the table, where Mr. Hilhouse joined her, and, after a very long grace, began to enjoy the good things set before him.

"I never tasted such exquisitely flavoured tea!" he said, appreciatively. "And this cake is delicious! We never get such cake at the Rectory. How is it that you manage to excel in everything, Mrs. Charlton?" he said, politely. "Few ladies can make tea as you do; and it is a great gift, and prized by one who, like myself, is a teetotaler."

"Most people like my tea," she admitted, with a smile. "I think, Rector, I must have been intended for an old maid. They are, I believe, supposed to have this gift to console them for their loneliness?"

"No, Mrs. Charlton," he answered, with one of his brightest glances. "You were never intended for an old maid. No one could look at you, no one could know you, and think that for one moment. You are essentially calculated for a married woman. I know of no one so fitted to make a man a good helpmate and companion!"

"Oh! I am very glad that is your opinion of me," she answered, with a bright look, thinking, if it were so, he would be glad to receive her as a daughter-in-law.

"Yes, I do, indeed, consider so," he continued, in his pompous, self-asserting manner. "And I have made up my mind to tell you so to-night, and to ask you to come to my assistance in the difficulties which lie in my path, which I find myself unable to meet alone. My beloved Emma held you in the highest esteem, and would, I feel sure, be glad if I can secure you as a helper and coadjutor in my trouble."

"You mean with regard to Nell?" she said, with her eyes raised intelligently to his.

"Yes, that is one of my difficulties. What do you advise?"

"Let her be happy in her own way, Rector," said Mrs. Charlton, persuasively, laying her hand upon his coat sleeve. "She seems really to care for Mr. Travers very much indeed, and I am sure he will be good to her. So make her happy, like a kind creature! Do—do—to please me!"

"Very well, Elsie, my dear, let that be a bargain between us. I will make her happy, if you will do the same by me?" he said, seriously.

"Oh! I will help you in any way I can," she returned. "Tell me what I can do, Mr. Hilhouse."

"You can become my wife," he answered, steadily. "I find I cannot get on alone, and I know of no one so suited to help me as you are, my dear. You will, I daresay, think these are early days to speak, and they are so, and I have no wish to make the affair public at present, but I see that it is for the good of both of us—it is not well for either you or me to live alone. I missed you sadly when you left the Rectory; but now you can return, and brighten it—at least, next summer, I suppose it had better not be till then."

"What are you talking about?" cried Elsie, impatiently. "I cannot really follow you, or make head or tail of what you are saying."

"Yet, surely I spoke plainly! There need be no doubts in your mind, my dear, and as my wife I am sure you will be happy."

"As your what?" she exclaimed, unable to restrain the laugh which rose to lips and eyes.

"My dear, this is no joke!" he said, solemnly. "It is very serious earnest. I daresay you thought I should not marry again, but I have decided that it will be best to do so. I

have too long enjoyed the companionship of a noble woman to be satisfied to live alone."

"And you would reward her truth and constancy by so soon giving your love to another? No, Mr. Hilhouse, I cannot look at your words seriously. I really must take them as a joke, and one which you must let me share with Cecil, when he returns. Perhaps I had better tell you his secret and mine, even though we had agreed to keep it a little longer. I am glad I have your good opinion, Rector, as we are going to ask you to accept me as a daughter-in-law. Cecil and I intend to be married in February, and, dear Mr. Hilhouse, we are unspeakably happy in one another's love."

Mr. Hilhouse sat regarding her with speechless astonishment.

"I will not believe it!" he cried, growing black with anger. "You could not have played such a double part. You must be trying to torment me! I would never consent to my son's marrying you. You—you who have altogether and too decidedly received my attentions—nay, you have sought them; you have even offered them yourself, and unasked. You cannot forget how you kissed me of your own free will! No, no! you may be weak, foolish, worldly; but I cannot believe you wicked! I cannot believe you kiss where you do not love!"

"Do have done with this absurd nonsense," said Elsie Charlton, with an indignant gleam in her eyes. "I did kiss you, I remember it perfectly; and I do not forget, as you appear to do, that it was when I broke to you the news of the death of the most perfect wife and woman who ever lived; when I believed you to be bowed down with grief. Trouble and sickness are great levellers. We show kindness at such times to friend and enemy alike, without one fear of being misjudged. If you have misjudged me the fault is yours, and the sin yours, for if you had a thought for any other woman at such a time, I am sorry for you; and now we had better drop the subject."

"Drop the subject!" cried Mr. Hilhouse, rising, and quivering with passion. "I will not drop the subject! Market Glenton shall ring with your perfidy! Everyone shall know you for what you are. It is all very well now that you have ensnared a younger man to put me aside; but I am not one to stand such treatment."

(To be continued.)

LASSING WILD ELEPHANTS.—As soon as the jungle had been to some extent chopped and then trampled down, so as to give a clear field for action, half a dozen tame elephants, with mahouts and noosers, were sent in to noose the wild elephants. The noosers manage with great skill the throwing of a stout rope made into a loop—as a cowboy uses his lariat—so as to catch each wild elephant in turn by a hind leg. The rope would be made fast at the other end to one of the tame elephants. As soon as the tame brute would feel that a catch had been made, it would start off at a slow, deliberate, cool, and unconcerned gait in the direction of the grand stand, where tying up was done, dragging behind it the captured animal. An elephant hauled along backward by one extended hind leg is at a serious disadvantage. It cannot claw and hold on to the ground with any great effect. About all it can do is to bellow, and that it does do energetically and woefully. Whenever one made any great effort at resistance a second tame elephant followed along, pushing with his trunk against the struggling creature. Then each beast was tied up, and some of them grew quite furious. One little fellow, after being tied up for twenty hours, was still so mad about it, that he would grow almost frantic with rage whenever anybody went near him. In two days more the whole herd had been tied up, and the job of subjugating them began.

SNUBBED THEM.

She snubbed them all,
The short and tall,
The sentimental lover;
Their ears and eyes
She'd criticise
And every flaw discover.

With frown and pout
She'd turn about,
Indifferent to duty,
If he who came
Her hand to claim
Was not endowed with beauty.

On wealth and style
Disposed to smile,
All artisans and scholars
She'd quite ignore,
And those who wore
Unfashionable collars.

For I confess
Her love of dress
Had so imbued this maiden
Of lowly birth,
That of less worth
Were minds with culture laden.

And though each day
With grave and gay
And learned she might mingle,
With short and tall,
She snubbed them all,
And that is why she's single.

For when she would
Recall the good,
And noble she'd rejected,
Their debt they paid
And snubbed the maid,
As might have been expected.

J. P.

LADY LILITH.

—O—

CHAPTER X.

No statue carved in marble could have looked colder, more impassive, than Lilith at that moment, and Lyndhurst's first impression was that she was not well.

"Do you feel faint?" he asked, drawing nearer, as if with the intention of offering his arm.

At the action a flood of carmine surged into her cheeks, and she drew up her head with the old haughty grace.

"No, I am quite well, only"—her voice grew sarcastic—"very much surprised to see you here."

Lyndhurst, in spite of his general knowledge of the world, was singularly ignorant with regard to the more delicate intricacies of feminine nature; and, where another man would instantly have guessed the meaning of Lilith's voice and demeanour, he could only wonder at the quick change that had taken place in her since he left her an hour or so ago.

"Surely," she continued, finding he made no answer, "your interview with Jenkins and the surveyor is very quickly over?"

"It has not taken place," he returned, biting his lip with ill-concealed annoyance. "When I got to Endacott I found Jenkins there alone, with a telegram to say that the surveyor had had an accident, which prevented his keeping the appointment, so I told Jenkins to look out for someone else, and bring him over in the morning as early as he could."

"And then, I presume, you walked over to Crawley Wood?"

"Yes—or, at least, I did not enter the wood itself, for I came round by this path, which is slightly nearer."

"And your horse?"

Lilith asked the question in an incredulous tone, still with the same scornful curve of her scarlet lips.

"Oh, she cast a shoe, and I left her at the forge at Endacott to have it put on. One of the men will lead her back to Heathcliff later on."

Lyndhurst gave the explanation quite naturally, but he was looking at his wife rather searchingly the while.

Lilith had lowered her eyes, and was drawing figures on the path with the end of the little ebony stick she carried. As he ceased speaking she looked up.

"And I suppose you met Letty Redmayne on your way home?"

"Yes, by the gate there," indicating one a little higher up that gave access to the wood. "I had been talking to her about five minutes when I saw you."

"When she saw me, you mean! I don't wish to dictate to you in any way, and of course the matter cannot possibly concern me in the least; but don't you think it rather unwise to talk so much to that young girl?"

Lyndhurst laughed as if amused.

"No, I do not. What harm can there possibly be in it?"

"None for you, perhaps, but maybe a good deal for her."

"If I thought that, you may be quite sure I should not do it; besides—"

He paused suddenly, and it struck Lilith, from his uneasy look, that he had been on the point of saying something imprudent, and had pulled himself up sharply, only just in time to prevent it escaping his lips.

"I have known her from babyhood," he added, in a different tone, "and I care for her and her father a great deal too much to risk harm coming to them through my instrumentality."

"Letty is very pretty," said Lady Lilith, "and even my short experience tells me that a pretty girl is more in danger of calumny than a plain one."

He looked puzzled, as if he could not quite follow her line of thought, and Lilith determined to say no more.

His explanation might be true, or might not. In the former case it still remained to find out the identity of the man whose arm had been round Letty's waist in the wood, but Lady Lilith felt it would be too great a sacrifice of pride to endeavour to elucidate the mystery, which, after all—so she told herself—did not really concern her in the very slightest degree.

Accordingly she dropped the subject, and husband and wife walked home side by side.

Soon after breakfast the next morning Colin came into her boudoir, knocking ceremoniously before he entered.

"It is a lovely morning; will you come with me to Westend?" he said, pretending not to notice the haste with which she put away a letter she had been writing.

It was to her aunt; but it was her maid's eyes, not Colin's, that she feared might read what she had written.

"To Westend? That is rather far for a walk, surely!"

"Yes, but I thought we might drive there and walk back, if you would care for it. I am going in the T-cart, and the groom can bring it back if we decide on walking."

She acquiesced at once and left the room, soon reappearing in her walking dress of green velvet, with delicate silver fox trimmings, and a small velvet toque, also trimmed with fur.

During her absence Lyndhurst had somehow possessed himself of a rose, a *Maréchal Niel* bud, only just opened.

"It is the last rose of summer—or, rather, of autumn," he observed, tendering it her rather shyly. "Will you have it?"

"Thank you."

As she took it a slight increase of colour stained her cheeks, and her fingers trembled so that she could hardly fasten it in her dress.

Lyndhurst, noticing her difficulty, came forward.

"Shall I pin it for you? You have your gloves on, you see, and it is awkward for you."

"Take care you don't prove yourself more awkward," she returned, with a certain archness that was quite new to him, and that he thought very bewitching.

He took a small pearl-headed pin out of his own necktie, and with it the rose was secured. Their faces were very close together during the operation—so close that her soft breath fanned the hair on his temples, and once the fur on her jacket brushed his cheek.

Colin's breath came a little quickly, and he set his teeth close together, as if by main force he would repress the excitement that the sense of her proximity brought.

"You are really very clever!" she said, smiling up at him from under the shadow of her thick black lashes. "I had no idea your fingers were so deft!"

"I have a good many virtues left for you to discover, I hope," he responded, in the same half-playful tone; and then he helped her to her place in the cart, and, seating himself at her side, gathered up the reins, and started the mare off at a quick trot.

Lilith thoroughly enjoyed the drive. For one thing, the morning was clear and bright, the sky was cloudless, and the air crisp and exhilarating.

The foliage still left on the trees showed lovely tints of crimson and orange; the scarlet berries in the hedges flashed in the sunshine. It seemed as if the dying summer still lingered to tell of her beauty.

Lyndhurst was more at ease than he had been since his ill-fated marriage, and talked to his wife of the cottages he was building, and the improvements he intended making on his estate.

"The houses were mere hovels—not fit for human beings to live in," he said, delighted to find in her not only a willing but an intelligent listener. "I was ashamed to own such pig-styes, and I am determined to raze them all to the ground, and build in their places decent, habitable cottages."

"That will improve your property, and be to your advantage as well as the tenants," observed Lilith.

"I did not think of that," he returned, with a slight contraction of the brow, for there seemed to him something mercenary in the speech; "I shall let the new cottages at the same rent as the old ones."

"But you might get more for them if you wished."

"I suppose I might, only I don't wish it. A landlord owes his tenants duties; there ought to be something more between them than the mere payment of the rent."

Lilith looked her surprise. She had never been accustomed to hearing of the duties owed by the rich to the poor; her worldly education had led her to imagine that the debt was quite the other way; and, under Lyndhurst's tuition, she learned to see matters in an entirely different light.

For the next week or two she and Colin were frequently together, and a subtle change was visible in the relations existing between them.

They no longer sat silent at the dinner-table, or took pains to avoid each other afterwards.

It is true no word, or look, or sign of love passed between them, but they continued friends, and Lilith still interested herself in her husband's affairs.

At his suggestion she even took to visiting in the cottages, where she was always welcome for the sake of her beautiful face and friendly manner, as well as the gifts she invariably brought.

During this time she saw nothing of Lady Westland or Sir Horace Dalton, neither were their names ever mentioned between herself and Lyndhurst.

Sometimes when she thought of Colin's

manner after Lady Westland's last visit the proud blood rushed to her cheek, and she drew up her neck with something of her old hauteur, and a determination to be independent and not submit to his wishes; and yet she always ended by thinking better of the determination, and deciding that, after all, perhaps, he was right.

One afternoon Lyndhurst came to her, looking rather worried and anxious.

"Shall you mind if Jones drives you in the victoria instead of my taking you over to W—?" he asked. (W— was the post-town, and Lilith had wanted to go there and make some purchases.)—"I find I have some business to attend to which can't very well be put off."

"It won't matter if I don't go to W— until to-morrow," Lilith returned. "My shopping is of very little importance."

"Oh, you may as well go; you will be dull staying at home all by yourself."

"Are you going out, then?"

"Yes."

"To Endacott?"

"No, not to Endacott."

It struck her that he seemed embarrassed, and certainly his dark cheeks showed an increase of colour under their tan. As he spoke he turned away and looked out of the window, apparently with the intention of avoiding her gaze.

"Very well, then; Jones can drive me," Lilith said, slightly wondering at his manner, and inclined to be a little offended at his reticence, which was very unlike his usual candour.

He ordered the carriage for her, and came out bareheaded to wrap the sable rugs closely about her, and see that the foot-warmer had been put in.

Lilith rewarded him with a bright smile and a word of thanks, and, forgetting that he had given her cause for offence, turned round to wave her hand after the horses had started.

Her shopping did not take very long—a few yards of ribbon, some skeins of silk, two or three tubes of oil colours—these were all she had to buy, and as she came out of the last shop, having completed her purchases, she suddenly found herself face to face with Sir Horace Dalton, who was talking to old James Redmayne.

"All right. I'll tell Lady Westland that you have saved the apples for her!" Lilith overheard the Baronet say.

Directly he saw her he nodded an adieu to his companion (who respectfully raised his hat and crossed the road), and came forward with outstretched hands.

"This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise, Lady Lilith! Are you alone?"

"Yes, I drove in to do some commissions," she answered, rather annoyed at the encounter, and hoping Dalton would not detain her. An after-thought made her add, "My husband was to have come with me, but, at the last moment, business prevented him."

"Indeed!" the Baronet observed, with a peculiar intonation. "No business would have been allowed to prevent me from accompanying you, had I been in Mr. Lyndhurst's place!"

"You are hardly in a position to make such a statement, Sir Horace," she said, coldly. "We are none of us able to tell what we should do under unknown conditions."

"But we can guess, Lady Lilith, and argue from the known to the unknown!"

"Is Lady Westland with you?" Lilith asked, abruptly, and signalling to the coachman, who was walking the horses up and down, as she spoke.

"Lady Westland! Oh, no! I have just come from town, and am on my way to Westland Chase. I had to go up to London last week to have an interview with my late uncle's solicitor, and the business connected with his estate has detained me rather longer than I anticipated. Stupidly enough, I neglected to telegraph what train I should arrive by, and

so there is no conveyance to meet me, and take me to the Chase.

He looked at Lillith rather pointedly as he said this, and she had no difficulty in reading his meaning. On her way home she would pass the gates of the Chase, and it would have been merely an act of friendly politeness to offer to set him down there. But she did not speak, and the carriage having drawn up close to the kerb he gave her his hand to help her in.

"May I not ask for a lift, Lady Lillith?" he said, boldly, seeing that she had no intention of taking his hint. "If your husband were here, I am sure he would not object."

Lillith coloured hotly at the covert meaning in his words. He meant to imply that the reason she did not offer him a seat in the carriage was fear of her husband's displeasure, and he was quite aware that, by touching her pride, he had taken the surest way of gaining his object.

"Certainly. I will set you down at the Chase if you wish," she said; and, no sooner was the permission given, than he had taken advantage of it, and seated himself at her side.

She gave the order "home" to the coachman, who touched his horses, and in ten minutes time they were outside the town, driving along the country road leading to Heathcliff.

At first, Dalton did not speak, and Lillith, finding the silence embarrassing, and determined to treat him as an ordinary acquaintance, neither more nor less, turned to him with a smile.

"You are silent, Sir Horace. Are you still so absorbed in the business that you have been transacting lately?"

"No," he returned, immediately. "I was thinking of— Surely you can guess without my telling?"

She shook her head, and carefully avoided meeting his eyes.

"I am not clever at guessing riddles—I never was. I find them much too fatiguing for ordinary conversation."

"Shall I give you the solution without your guessing?"

"No; certainly not!" hastily. "I am sure it would not interest me."

"You are cruel!" he returned, in a low voice, and looking at her reproachfully.

"However, I will not complain. Fortune has treated me much better than I dared hope, in letting me have an interview with you thus unexpectedly. How is it," he continued, abruptly, "that you have not been at the Chase? Lady Westland has been expecting you to return her call."

"Has she? I am very sorry I have not done so, but I have been so much engaged."

"Is that a true reason?" he asked, still in the same low tone, "or is it only an excuse? I was afraid that you kept away on purpose to avoid me."

"Then you flattered yourself too much," she answered, coldly. "I do not know what right you have to suppose that your presence or absence would have the slightest effect upon me;" and yet, even as she spoke, and felt the deep, intense gaze of his blue eyes upon her, she began to tremble and to fear that she had overrated her own strength of mind, and the support a sense of duty gave her.

During these last few weeks she had conscientiously striven to put all thought of the Baronet away from her, and, to a certain extent, she had succeeded; but the old love had been very deeply rooted, or rather, it would be more correct to say that the old fascination had been very strong, and very hard to overcome.

In point of fact, she had not overcome it; its spell was upon her now, in spite of her cold words, and still colder manner. She could control the outward expression of her feelings, but not the feelings themselves.

"Is that really the case?" asked Sir Horace, in a pained voice. "I wish I could feel equally indifferent, but I know that it is impossible. Listen to me, Lillith!" he continued, insistently; "I am as well aware as

you that the past is irrevocable, that you are lost to me for ever, and nothing I can do or say will make any difference in our fates. But something is still left; if I cannot have your love I can have your friendship, and that is better than nothing at all. For your sake I have conquered the old feelings, and schooled myself to look upon you as the wife of another man. It has been a hard task, but I have achieved it, and now I ask you to forget what has been, and let me hold the position of your friend; let me see you occasionally, and talk to you as I would to my sister—if I had one. Surely it is little enough to ask!"

Almost the same proposal as she herself had made to Lyndhurst!

He was watching her intently as he spoke, and he saw the delicate colour fade from her cheeks—saw the sweet lips trembling with an agitation which all her self-control could not hide. A triumphant light came in his own eyes, but she did not notice it.

"It is better not," she said, presently, "I have my husband to consider, and he would probably object to a friendship between you and me."

"And what if he does? Are you his slave that you are bound to submit to whatever he chooses to dictate?"

"No; but I am his wife, and it is therefore my duty to consult his wishes."

Sir Horace's brows darkened. There was a firmness in her tone that he did not like, and that boded ill for his plans.

"He has no right to exercise an arbitrary authority over you; besides," his voice sank to a whisper, "I tell you, Lillith, that if you throw me over completely, if you decree that I am never to see you again, I shall get desperate. It will not matter to me what becomes of me, and I shall go headlong to the bad. I know my own nature, and I know whither it will lead me. There is nothing in the world I care for—nothing for me to live for. If you will be my friend I will be loyal and true to you, and, trust me, I will never offend your ear with a word that all the world might not hear!"

He was playing on her weakness—taking advantage of those feelings of womanly compassion whose power he had calculated to a nicety. If he had spoken of love Lillith would have rebuked him indignantly, and forbidden him her presence, but this appeal to her friendship was one she could not resist.

"If I can ever do anything for you—if, in anyway, it should be in my power to promote your happiness—believe me I will do it!" she said, a certain wistful sadness audible in her voice. "All the same, I think it better we should not meet—better for both of us."

"Still you will not try to avoid me?"

"No; I will not try to avoid you." She gave the promise reluctantly; but the words were spoken, and he had gained his point. So far he was satisfied. He was wise enough to know that "it is the first step that costs!" and the first step had been taken.

By this time they were within about a mile of Westland Chase, and close to a lane that led up to Woodlowes—old Redmayne's farm. Lillith, on her visit to the farm, had approached it from the other side, but her husband had pointed out its picturesque red gables to her as they passed on their way to W—, and she had also once seen Letty coming down the lane from the house.

As the carriage passed the bottom of the lane, a man's figure became visible, walking quickly towards the road, and the coachman, observing him, drew up.

"It is Mr. Lyndhurst, my lady, shall I wait for him?" he asked, respectfully, and Lillith gave an affirmative answer.

"My husband!" she murmured, half to herself. "How strange! He must have been at Woodlowes."

"But not to see James Redmayne," puts in Sir Horace, quickly, "for he, you will recollect, was at W— this afternoon, and he told me he should not return home till night!"

CHAPTER XI.

The encounter was not a pleasant one either for husband or wife, but both were sufficiently self-controlled to hide their feeling from the other. Lyndhurst greeted Dalton with a courtesy that was more cold than friendly, and seated himself opposite, apparently taking it for granted that the baronet intended accompanying them all the way to Heathcliff. Sir Horace, however, only went half a mile farther, and got out at the Park gates leading to Westland Chase.

After his departure, Lillith lost no time in explaining that she had met him by accident in W—, and, at his request, had given him a seat in the carriage. As he heard the explanation, Colin's brow cleared, for no doubt of his wife's truthfulness had ever crossed his mind. Whatever Lillith's faults might be, she was, at all events, too proud to descend to a lie, and this her husband instinctively felt.

Perhaps Lillith fancied that he might imitate her candour, and tell her the business that had taken him to Woodlowes, but this he made no attempt to do; indeed, he was very silent during the rest of the drive, and Lillith was really glad when the Hall was reached, for she was annoyed at his reticence, and thoroughly unnerved by the events of the afternoon.

Had she done right, she asked herself, in yielding to Dalton's request? And as she recalled her husband's antipathy to the Baronet and probable feelings on the subject, she decided that she had been hurried away by impulse into giving a promise which she had no business to have given—which Dalton had no right to have attempted to exact from her. Still, even now the selfishness of his conduct did not strike her—it was her own imprudence which she blamed.

The next morning at breakfast she observed how singularly harassed and worried Colin looked; and noticed, too, that he was unusually silent.

During the progress of the meal he said,—

"I find, Lillith, I shall have to leave Heathcliff for a few days. Would you like to go to Lady Lester during my absence, or should you prefer asking her down here to keep you from feeling dull?"

"Neither," she returned, promptly. "My aunt is the very last person in the world to be made a convenience of, and I do not wish to risk offending her by suggesting such a thing!"

"But you will dislike being in the house by yourself?"

"Yes," she answered, hesitatingly, and playing with her spoon. "I don't suppose I shall care for it. But how long are you going to be away?"

"That I cannot tell—yet," he said, his brow contracting. "I shall have to be guided by circumstances. It might be a day or two, or it may be longer."

"Are you going to London?"

She asked the question in all innocence, but it evidently embarrassed him. He looked away, and there was a distinct pause before he replied.

"Yes; to London."

"Do not," Lillith exclaimed, with a slight uplifting of her golden head, "think that I wish to pry into your private matters, or that my question was dictated by any such desire. It only occurred to me that if you were going to stay in town I might as well go with you, and take the opportunity of seeing my aunt and cousin without trespassing on their hospitality."

"I am not going to my own house," he put in with some haste. "I shall stay at an hotel—the Langham, most probably. You see," he added, as if in excuse, "it is hardly worth while having the furniture unwashed, and the carpets put down in the Park-lane house just for a few days' accommodation, when I shall be much better attended to at an hotel, and in

every way more comfortable. Of course, if you would care to come with me—

"I should not care," Lillith said, curtly. "I will remain at Heathcliff."

It was clear to her that he preferred her not being with him, and she was determined not to force her presence upon him against his wish.

Colin got up and went to the window, which overlooked the terrace, and beyond that the park.

It was not a pleasant morning, a drizzling rain was falling, and the landscape looked blurred and indistinct. The breakfast-room itself presented an infinitely prettier picture, with its blazing fire of scented pine logs, the pots of flowers and ferns, the table with the spotless damask napery, and polished silver coffee equipage; and last, but not least, the lovely *châtelaine* at the head of the table. Perhaps Colin thought so too, for the moment from the window with a little exclamation of impatience, and resumed his seat.

"You may be quite sure that I shall not remain from home a minute longer than I can help," he said, earnestly, adding, as he noticed her look of surprise, "the cottages will be at the standstill without me, and I am anxious to get them finished as soon as possible."

"Ah! yes!" Lillith answered, indifferently.

"Will you—will you write to me while I am away?" Lyndhurst went on, raising the request as hesitantly as if he had been a school-boy.

"Write to you!" she returned, in surprise. "What can I possibly have to write to you about?" Her violet eyes were opened wide in unconcealed astonishment. The request was the very last she would have expected him to make, and she was really taken aback by it.

"Oh!" Lyndhurst said, with an embarrassed laugh, "you might tell me how you were."

"I can tell you that beforehand. I have never had a day's illness in my life—except a headache—so there is no chance of my making myself interesting as an invalid."

"As you will," he said, looking disappointed, and seeing his expression Lillith added, quickly,—

"Of course, I will write if you wish it. I can tell you how Gyp and Rollo are, and if the horses are all right, and whether the lake is frozen. Oh! I daresay I can find sufficient news to fill a letter, if you will be content with a very small one."

"I will be content with anything that gives me news of you," he was going to say, but altered his mind, and substituted "home."

"What train are you going by?" she asked.

"The ten-fifteen."

"So soon! Why, you have no time to spare."

"Very little, but I have ordered the dog-cart, and told Streeter to pack my Gladstone bag, so I have nothing to do but put my coat on."

"I suppose you knew you were going last night," she observed; and he made no answer, but again went to the window to see if the dog-cart had been brought round to the front door. Yes, there it was, waiting, and now he had to say adieu to his wife.

"Good-bye!" he said, taking her hand, and holding it for a moment with a close pressure in his. "Good-bye, Lillith!"

"Good-bye!" she returned, without looking up—and so she missed the curious wistfulness of his eyes as they dwelt on her face—the loving, longing, hungry look of a man who leaves what is dearest to him in all the world!

Perhaps he hoped she would come into the hall, and help him on with his coat, as she had done once or twice when no servant was near. But, if so, he was disappointed, for she stayed quietly at the table, not even moving when she heard the noise of the wheels, as he drove off.

A moment later, Lyndhurst's valet came into the room, bringing the morning papers

which had only just arrived, and which he placed at his mistress's elbow.

"Why, Streeter!" exclaimed Lillith, looking up in surprise, "how is it you are not gone with your master?"

Over the man's impassive face there flashed the faintest possible smile. And it was gone so quickly, that one could hardly say it had been there.

"Because my master preferred being alone, my lady," he replied, in his usual slow, respectful tones, and the answer, strangely enough, made Lillith feel somehow as if the man were laughing at her.

Lyndhurst's absence made more difference to the house than she could have imagined possible; and she herself felt curiously dull in consequence. As it was raining she could not go out walking or driving, and it seemed as if she could not amuse herself indoors either. First of all, she got out her painting materials, and tried to finish a sketch she had made last week; but the colours would not mix properly, and the little work she did was highly unsatisfactory, so she put the picture away, and set down to the piano, determining to practise some new music that had just been sent from London a few days ago.

Either her voice or the piano was out of tune—at any rate, she could not satisfy her own critical taste, and, rather impatiently, she closed the piano, and made up her mind to go to the conservatories, and gather enough flowers to refill the vases in the boudoir—thinking that perhaps the employment would occupy her thoughts, and chase away the depressing sense of impending evil that had fallen upon her.

As she descended the broad oak stairs, the sound of voices in the hall reached her ears, and half way down she came to a pause, at the sight of old James Redmayne in angry colloquy with Streeter, who had chanced to open the door.

"I tell you I must see the Squire. I will see him!" the farmer almost shouted. "My business with him is important—most important, and every minute you keep me from him is a minute lost!"

"And I tell you that you can't see him, for the very simple reason that he is not in the house," replied the valet, imperturbably.

"I don't believe you—you are telling lies—I see it in your face!" cried Redmayne, who was evidently too deeply excited to be reasonable. "He would not likely to be out on a pouring wet day like this!"

"Rain or shine don't make much difference to him. He's gone to London—went by the ten-fifteen train this morning, and, what's more, I don't know when he'll be back, so if your business with him is particular or not I guess it'll have to wait, and your temper 'll have time to get cool," observed Streeter, insolently.

"Gone to London! Heavens, what can I do—what can I do!" exclaimed the old man, striking his forehead with the palm of his hand, and apparently beside himself with rage or sorrow.

Lillith never forgot his appearance, or the picture he made standing just within the open door, against the wall-paper background of dark sky, his hat in his hand, and his white hair, shaggy and unkempt, straying wildly about his face. His cheeks were blanched, and their pallor, beneath the tan and sunburn of his complexion, had an effect almost of ghastliness, which was added to by the wildness of his eyes and general demeanour.

Before the valet had time to speak his mistress was on the spot, and to his intense surprise—for Streeter, in common with the rest of the servants, was inclined to regard Lady Lillith as pretty equally composed of pride and coldness—she took the old farmer's hand, brown hand in her own small white one, and drew him gently into the library. Her woman's instinct had told her he was in some great trouble, and that same instinct bade her try to help him.

"Come in here," she said, soothingly, as she shut the door so as to make sure of no chance of eavesdropping. "It is quite true that Mr. Lyndhurst is from home, but if I can assist you in any way, or even write to you him for, I shall be very glad to do it."

He looked at her vaguely for a minute, and it almost seemed as if he had forgotten who she was—as, in effect, he had. His mind was so full of one subject, that it excluded all others.

"Don't you remember me?" she said, gently. "I am Lady Lillith Lyndhurst, and I came to see you one day at the farm, and you introduced your daughter Letty to me—"

She paused, for a wild cry broke from the old man's lips—a cry so plaintive, so piteous, that it involuntarily moved Lillith to tears.

"Letty—my daughter—my only child—who was the very apple of my eye—the flower of my life—my one ewe lamb!" he murmured, more to himself than to her, while he wrung his hands frantically together. "She was so sweet, and so gentle, and so good—indeed, indeed, my lady," his tone changed to one of eager conviction, "she was good and pure as snow when it first falls from Heaven! If she has changed—if she has been led into evil, the fault is not hers, and surely Heaven will not visit it upon her! Oh! Letty, Letty!"

His sorrow was terrible to witness; all the more terrible because education had not taught him to restrain it, and he gave vent to his feelings uncurbed. Tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks—the tears of a strong man's anguish which can find no other mode of expression.

An idea of the truth came to Lillith, and her eyes grew even more pitiful, her manner more gentle.

"Sit down, Mr. Redmayne," she said, forcing him into a chair, "and then tell me what has happened? If I can do nothing else for you, I can at least give you my sympathy."

"Oh, my lady! you are very good! I feel it, but I cannot thank you for it. I think I am past feeling grateful, or anything else. All I can think of is Letty—my poor, lost Letty!"

"But what has happened to her?" Lillith asked, in a low voice that trembled in spite of herself.

"She has gone away! Left her home—left me! Left me, did I say? No!" the farmer cried, springing up, while his voice rang out clear and accusing. "She has not left me! She has been taken away—persuaded by some villain's arts, which she, poor innocent child that she is, was foolish enough to trust to! Read this, my lady, and then you will see what has happened!"

He took from his pocket a little crumpled morsel of paper, and thrust it into her hands. On it were inscribed these words in pencil:—

"MY DEAR, DEAR FATHER.—I am leaving you, and I dare not say 'good-bye,' because I know you would be so angry with me, and would not let me go. Father, I have found out I do not love Stephen Brooks as I thought I did, and I am afraid to meet him and tell him so, for I know I have behaved very badly to him, and I am ashamed of myself. I am going away, but for reasons that I will explain by and-by. I cannot tell you where. I can only tell you that great good fortune has come to me, and in a little while I may come back to you, perhaps." Here was a blot, as if a tear had fallen on the paper, and the following sentence was illegible. "Don't think too hardly of me, father. I know I am to blame, and that I am a wicked, deceitful girl, but I do love you, dear old daddy, just as much as ever; and I am still your loving little daughter—LETTY."

Lillith read the letter over twice—the affectionate, inconsequent, frivolous, and yet pathetic little letter, that was so like the girl herself.

Redmayne watched her eagerly as she read it, and never moved his eyes from her face until she gave it back to him.



["WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER?" LILITH ASKED, IN A LOW, TREMBLING VOICE.]

"Why have you come to seek Mr. Lyndhurst?" was her first question.

"Because I wanted him to read this, and tell me what he thought of it. I knew he would advise me for the best—he always does. He is so good and kind and clever; and I am too dazed to think of anything myself. There is no one else that I can go to, and I don't know how to set about getting her back."

"When did your daughter leave you?"

"It must have been the first thing this morning; but I did not know it until half-past nine o'clock. She was not down to breakfast as usual, but I did not think much of that, for sometimes she oversleeps herself, and I thought she might have done so this morning. However, when it was close on half-past nine I decided it was time to wake her, so I went up and knocked at her door. There was no answer, and when I called her she did not reply, so I opened the door and looked in, and then I saw she was not there; but I caught sight of the letter on the chimney-piece, sealed up, and directed to me. And when I opened it I knew that some cruel man—Heaven pardon me if I curse him!—had been at work, and wrenched her affections away from Stephen, who loved her so true!"

The old man broke off, unable to continue. Even in the midst of his own grief he was moved to pity at the thought of one which he knew would be equally great.

"Listen to me!" Lilith said, impressively. "You must send a telegram immediately to Mr. Brooks, and ask him to come here. He will help you better than anyone else to get your daughter back—for of course, you do want her back?"

"Want her back! I would welcome her like I would an angel from Heaven. Do you think!" he exclaimed, turning upon her with sudden fierceness, "that disgrace or shame would make any difference to me? Ah, my lady, you don't know a father's love, or you wouldn't doubt me."

Lilith drew back, but more deeply by his words than the old farmer could have deemed possible. It was quite true—she never had known a father's love—never would know it, any more than she would that yet holier feeling that binds mother and child together. A minute later, and she had ceased thinking of herself, and merged her interests in those of her companion.

"I do not doubt you, Mr. Redmayne. I am sure that you would follow the dictates of a heart that could not lead you wrong," and if Lyndhurst could have seen her he would have been as much surprised at her words as her manner, which was sweet and tender and feminine. She laid her slim white hand on the old farmer's sleeve as she was speaking, and her dewy eyes were full of divinest sympathy. "I am afraid my husband will not be home for a few days, and so you must not wait for him, or else much precious time will be lost. Shall I send to W—, and get the police to make inquiries for you?"

But to this suggestion Redmayne would not listen. He would not have the police interfering between him and his daughter—why, people would be thinking she had been stealing, or something of that sort. No; whatever was done, must be done by Stephen or himself, and he thought he could not do better than follow her ladyship's advice, and telegraph to Stephen straight off. He was at work at Glasgow, but he would be sure to come—even if he lost his place through it.

"I will send one of the men to the station with the telegram if you will write it," said Lilith, and Redmayne gratefully accepted the suggestion; indeed, she herself wrote out the message at his dictation, and with her own hand she sealed it up, and gave it to a groom to despatch. Then she fetched a glass of wine from the dining-room, and made the old man drink it.

"I don't know how I can thank you for your kindness, my lady," he said, preparing to depart; "in fact, to my thinking, there are

no thanks for kindness, so I won't say any more."

Lilith thought of that "one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin," but she only put her hand in that of the farmer, and then went to the door, and let him out, saying—

"I shall come over to the Woodlows to-morrow, and see if you have any news, and I hope—I hope most sincerely—I shall see Letty back with you!"

(To be continued.)

Nothing can be worse for the quality of a man's labour than for him to imagine that the sphere in which he works is a low or unimprovable one. Once let this notion be fastened upon him, and he cannot help regarding his occupation with some degree of contempt, and feeling himself in a measure degraded by it. One of two results will always follow—either he will leave it and strain after something else for which he may be less fitted; or, remaining in it, he will give to it but half his powers, and perform it only half as well as he is capable of doing.

A MODEL KITCHEN.—The model kitchen should be of goodly dimensions and well-lighted. If possible it should bask in the morning sunlight, as the health of the kitchen labourers is the foundation upon which rests the welfare and comfort of the household. Let the walls and ceiling be refreshed each year with a light, smoke-tinted lime coat. Let the finishings and floor be of hard pine, oiled and shellaced; this simplifies the labour called "cleaning." The ice-chest should be built into the end of the kitchen hall, and its drain should pass out of the house. The ice compartment should open out of the hall, and it will keep the ice man and the ice drippings out of the kitchen; the food compartment ought to open from the kitchen, to save steps. If considered in the designing of the building, this hall can be at the farthest point from the stove.



[“LET ME THINK!” THE SQUIRE MUTTERED, BURYING HIS FACE IN HIS HANDS.]

NOVELLETTE.]

RHONA'S REVENGE.

—O—

CHAPTER IV.—(continued.)

Mrs. SOMERSET had borne her husband five, but they had all died—one at two months, another at six, two lived only an hour, and the fifth struggled for existence for a whole year, and died only after a hard fight for life. This last was a bitter disappointment, hard indeed to bear. She had grown to love the child so dearly, to lose it was unbearable; and she looked forward with great eagerness to the advent of the next.

As the days went by she found Rhona of great service to her. The girl was ever ready to make herself useful, and being skilful with her fingers made several fairy-like little robes and garments for the expected strangers; and when her time came, she felt content to live still with her babe in her arms, knowing that her husband's comfort would be well looked after by the woman she had befriended.

And so it was. Though torn with conflicting emotions, a prey to the direst anxiety with regard to Guy's state of health, she yet never failed in one duty she had to perform; and Oswald Somerset was as well looked after as if his wife had been up and about.

“How is she to-night?” he asked, one evening, about ten days after the birth of the child, as he came in, gun in hand.

“Much stronger. She talks about getting up in three or four days.”

“And the child?”

“Is very well. It seems perfectly healthy!”

“Heaven send it lives!” he ejaculated, fervently.

“I think it will. There is no reason why it should not.”

“Ah! the curse of blood! the curse of

blood!” he muttered, wildly, covering his eyes with his hands; but recovering himself immediately he asked, “Can she nurse it? Is she strong enough to do that?”

“Oh, yes!” smiled Rhona. “Nurse Diggory says she could bring up two!”

“That is well. I have great faith in Mother Diggory. She knows as much as any doctor.”

“She seems to. I don't know what the dwellers in these remote parts would do without her!”

“Nor I. The nearest doctor is twenty miles off.”

“Too far to be of much use in case of emergency.”

“Yes, indeed. By the way, is nurse here now?”

“Yes; she came to see how her patient is progressing.”

“Then I'll go up and see what she thinks of the baby.” And he ran up the stairs, but came down almost immediately, holding a paper in his hand. “Here is your *Times*, Mrs. Leigh. I forgot to give it you.”

“Thanks, thanks!” she responded, taking it eagerly. “It is so good of you to remember my anxiety for news!”

“Not at all. I wish I could do more for you. It is not for a man in my position to make remarks against Squire Lancelot; still, I must say I think he has behaved shamefully towards you, especially under existing circumstances.”

“He has,” murmured Rhona.

“And understand, please, that as long as you wish to stay here my humble house is at your disposal.”

“Thanks! How good you are!” she answered, gratefully, as he turned and left the room.

“How good he is, and how bad the other! How merciless! how cruel! to drive me out, to turn me adrift, at the world's mercy, and I his son's wife! Oh, it was infamous! Yet he shall live to regret it,” she continued, her

eyes blazing furiously, “live to regret that he drove me from his doors like a dog. Nothing I did deserved such treatment, and I will have revenge—revenge! which is sweeter to an Italian than life itself! I will pay back every insult, every slight, with interest. Heaven grant my child be a boy, then nothing Squire Lancelot can do will keep him, the grandson of a Contadina, from inheriting King's Leigh, from being squire of all the broad lands which lie around; and I will call him Lancelot to add yet another sting. Grant my prayer, Heavenly Father, grant my prayer! Put vengeance for once into the hands of thy creature. Let me have power to give an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, to repay all my wrongs tenfold!” and sinking on her knees, she raised her arms aloft, and prayed with frenzied fervour.

After awhile, the frenzy of indignation passed, and rising she drew the lamp nearer, and eagerly scanned the columns of the *Times* for news of her absent and dearly-loved husband. Swiftly her eyes travelled from paragraph to paragraph until they lighted upon this.—

“We regret to state that Lieutenant Leigh, who fought so gallantly at the Khouttar Pass, and was there wounded in the head, is in a very critical state. Few hopes are entertained of his recovery, the doctors believing he can only live a month at most. Should he, however, regain his bodily strength and live, he will be hopelessly insane. He has been recommended for the Victoria Cross, on account of the great bravery he displayed in rescuing his colonel from the hands of the Afreedees.”

Twice the wretched girl read it before she grasped the real meaning of the dreadful news; and then, with a shrill scream, she flung down the paper, and fell across the table insensible.

Somerset and the nurse, hearing the scream, hurried to the parlour.

“Good heavens! What can have happened?” he cried, as he lifted her up. “Bad news from the seat of war,” he added, as his

eyes fell on the paper. "Her husband is dead!"

"Ay, ay," muttered Nurse Diggory, wagging her old grey head to and fro like a mandarin, "an' there'll be more dead afore the moon waxes agin."

"What shall we do with her?" demanded the keeper, looking anxiously at the white face lying on his breast.

"Carry her upstairs, master, an' I'll put her to bed; and, ay, oh! poor body, she'll never rise agin."

"Don't say that—don't say that," he rejoined, quickly. "If my wife hears you it will distress her, and may make her ill."

"No, no! No fear of that. Your good lady is all right, master. Shall do well and. 'Tis this poor body as will suffer. But carry her up, master, carry her up; she'll do better above."

Swiftly he carried her up, and laid her on the snowy little bed.

"Can you do all that is necessary, or shall I go for a doctor?" he asked, doubtfully.

"All that's necessary!" she repeated, contemptuously. "He'll not do all that's necessary over and over again for many as has been as she—ay, and worse too? Who twenty mile and fetch a doctor, master, if ye wish it. Some half-diggery loon, as will know no more an' I do; but I'll ye nothin' I'll move her. She's as good as dead 'unow, as far as doctorin' goes," and, obstinately repeating that cheery declaration, she turned him out of the room, and proceeded to put her patient between the blankets, and got up that bottle, and administered brandy and several other things to restore consciousness, all in vain. Rhona remained cold and pulseless.

For two days she remained in the same comatose state. Nothing roused her.

Mrs. Somerset, on hearing about it, insisted upon getting up and going to her; and though her husband was in a terrible state of fear lest she should make herself ill, and thus endanger the life of their child, said nothing, and let her have her own way.

At her request, he borrowed a horse and rode into Denton for a doctor, the best the country town could produce. A pompous, red-faced man, who came, looked at Rhona, said all Nurse Diggory had done was correct, and that the lady might safely be left in her hands, pocketed a fee of a guinea, and departed, leaving the old midwife chuckling with glee at the flattering testimony of the medico, and wagging her head more furiously than ever.

Twenty-four hours later, Rhona recovered somewhat, and her child was born, but then she began to sink rapidly.

"Show it me, show it me!" she cried, faintly, and Mrs. Somerset put the little bundle of flannel in her arms.

"I shall not be able to nurse it!" she asked, inquiringly; she felt she was dying.

"I think not," replied Kate Somerset, "you will not be strong enough. At all events at present," she added, soothingly.

"Then will you? You are strong, you can take both children. Don't let my baby die. Promise you won't?" imploringly she looked at the elder woman, who nodded her head, and said,—

"Yes."

"Thank you, thank you! How good you are! I feel more thankful now. I know it will live. It must not die, indeed it must not. My poor, poor Guy. Now that he is dead it is the heir. Is he dead, though?" she asked, passing her hand over her forehead in a bewildered way.

"No, he is not dead," replied her companion.

"No! Not dead!—then mad! mad! How horrible! He will never know me again, never be able to right me in the eyes of the world, never revenge me all the insults I have borne. Oh! my love, my husband! To think that we shall never meet again—never. Never this side of the grave. But my child will take his place. No one can keep him out of his birthright. You will have

him christened, Mrs. Somerset, soon. I wish him called Lancelot, after the grandfather, who has shown so much mercy and kindness."

"Lancelot!" echoed the keeper's wife, "that name will not do."

"Why not?" demanded Rhona, impatiently.

"Because," began Mrs. Somerset, and then she leant over and whispered something in the sick woman's ear.

A look of terrible disappointment swept across the man face, the light died out of the eyes, and tears began to trickle slowly down the pale cheeks.

For a while she lay back on her pillows in silence, till suddenly looking up she asked,—

"Tell me the truth—am I dying?"

The deepening hungry eyes fixed themselves on Kate's face, with an intensity that forced the truth from her reluctant lips.

"I fear you are."

"There is no hope?"

"Alas! No, none."

"Then will you promise to do something for me?"

"If I can."

"It is about my child, the future heir of King's Leigh."

"Yes."

"Consider, sit beside me and bend down. I wear a name to talk above a whisper."

Obediently Mrs. Somerset seated herself on the edge of the bed, and listened to the low words of the dying woman. At first horror and amazement were depicted on her face as she listened, and she broke out,—

"No, no, don't tempt me, I cannot—I cannot. Such a wrong would bring a righteous retribution on my head. I dare not, and my husband!"

"Win him over. The chance may come. Only do what I ask if it does. The advantage will all be yours, and what harm will it do? Promise me. He cursed me—he deserves some punishment. Let it be this."

Long she pleaded, and at last wrung a reluctant consent from the keeper's wife.

"You swear this," she cried, her fast-glazing eyes fixed on the other's terrified face.

"I swear," muttered Mrs. Somerset, faintly.

"Then I die content," and sinking back on her pillows she closed her eyes, and lay breathing so gently that she hardly seemed to live. Fainter and fainter it grew, and just as the sun was beginning to crimson the eastern heavens, with one little tremulous cry she died.

CHAPTER V.

HIS SON'S SON.

FAITHFULLY WAS the promise given by Kate Somerset kept. She nursed both the infants, and tended them with impartial care. Any one would have thought they were both her own children, so equally did she divide her time and attention between them; and, truth to tell she loved the little stranger almost if not quite as well as her own babe, and lavished just as many caresses on it.

"What do you intend to do about poor Rhona's child?" inquired her husband, some three months after the luckless girl's death.

"In what way do you mean?" asked Mrs. Somerset, with a startled look at him.

"I mean in the way of handing it over to its grandfather, the Squire," he replied.

"I—I—don't—know," she faltered, while the blood rushed in a crimson wave up to her very brow.

"I suppose you don't want to part with it?" he continued, looking at her keenly, and noting her changing colour.

"No, no!" she cried, eagerly, pressing the little mite to her bosom.

"I really believe," he observed, with a smile, "that you like it better than our child."

"Not better, but as well, I think; and then it requires more care, being delicate."

"Yes, poor motherless creature. You are

right to give it a large share of your tenderness."

"Will—will—it be—necessary?" she asked, after a pause, with strange hesitation; "to—communicate with the Squire?"

"Not at present," replied her husband; and at his words her face brightened, but shadowed again as she went on. "After a while of course we must; it would never do to keep the child out of the inheritance it may possess, and the advantages which it would get."

"I dare say they would not mind," she rejoined, with almost unnecessary bitterness and energy.

"Who do you mean by 'they'?"

"The Squire and Miss Jocasta."

"Possibly not. But you seem to forget that the child has a father, and that probably he will want his child—all that is left of the woman he loved."

"I don't forget, far from it. Still I thought, under the circumstances—the circumstances of his insanity—that it would be useless to consider him."

"Not at all. He may recover."

"The doctors say he won't."

"Doctors are not infallible."

"Of course not. Yet I should say, from the nature of the wound, that it will prove a bad case."

"I fear so," agreed the keeper; and he sighed at the thought of the fair-haired, blue-eyed boy, whom he had taught to handle a gun with skill and dexterity.

"What do you intend to do, then?" asked Kate, after another and longer pause, during which she had been gazing in her sunny eyes, and her brows curved with anxiety.

"Wait till Mr. Guy comes back."

"Has he left India?"

"Yes. I saw in the paper that he and five or six other officers were invalidated home."

"And after?" The question was put with an eagerness she could not conceal.

"I shall see how he goes on. If he recovers, I shall tell him all."

"And if he does not?" she interjected, quickly.

"If he does not I must be guided by circumstances. The Squire may soften to his son's child, though he never would have done so to his son's wife. He may come here and demand it of us."

"Does he know that we have it?"

"I suppose he does. Or if he doesn't now, he can easily find out."

"Not so very easily," she objected. "The only person, I believe, besides ourselves who knew Rhona had a child is Nurse Diggory, and I told her to keep silent."

"True. Still he could easily find out if he chose."

"I hope he won't," she said, nervously.

"So do I, for your sake, Kate. You seem so loth to part with the little stranger."

"I am;" and she hugged it closer to her breast.

"But you see it would be most unjust of us to keep it here—keep it from all the advantages that would belong to Squire Leigh's grandson—wealth, luxury, ease, position against a life of toil in a lowly state."

"Of course," she acquiesced, abstractedly, while she stared intently at the glaring embers.

"You may have your nursing for years, so you mustn't fret, old lady," he said, cheerfully, stooping to kiss her. "We need not be in a hurry. You have Rhona's marriage certificate, and the little one will be just as well with you, while young, as with the grand folk up at the Leigh—better, perhaps. I must see to-morrow about registering the births of the children. They are not very particular in these remote parts about such matters, still it will be better and safer in case of any trouble in the future."

"Yes," agreed his wife, absently; and then, with another kiss, and one each to the sleeping children, he went out to his duties in the woods and preserves—duties which were

becoming heavier every day, for it was drawing near the glorious Twelfth—went out full of health and strength as fine a specimen of English manhood as ever stepped.

The next morning all that was left of him was brought back to the pretty, rose-covered cottage in the heart of the green woods; all that was left—a lifeless corpse, with four desperate knife wounds in the breast. An affray with poachers.

He had come upon a gang of them; and, with his usual bravery, engaged with them single-handed. The ruffians, thinking he had help near at hand, fled; but one of them, being hotly pressed by him, turned and used his knife with deadly intent, and so suddenly, that Oswald could not save himself by using the gun he carried. The murderer got away, and left not the slightest trace behind him that could lead to his detection.

Somerset was found an hour or two later by some of the under-keepers in an exhausted condition. After a few feeble words of explanation he expired before they could get him home.

Mr. Langhorne was in a terrible state of grief and rage at the murder of his favourite, and offered a large reward for the apprehension of the assassin.

Uselessly, however. No clue was ever found, and his untimely death was unavenged; and, after a time, forgotten by all save his master, who had been peculiarly attached to him, and his sorrowing widow, whose tearless grief was awful to witness.

For her all joy in life seemed over, and but for the two babes who needed her so much she felt she must have died. They were a link which tied her to life, and after the first agony of grief was over she rallied for their sakes, and fought against the melancholy which consumed her.

Through the kindness of her late husband's master she was fairly comfortable from a monetary point of view. He allowed her half the sum weekly that he had given Oswald, and gave her permission to remain at the cottage, in which had been spent the happiest and most sorrowful days of her life.

Accepting his offer with gratitude, she settled down into a monotonous existence, colourless and changeless, brightened only by the baby-chatter of the children, who were beginning to lip the title of "mother" in her fond ears.

Meanwhile the heir had returned to King's Leigh—not the dashing, brilliant, handsome fellow who had set off in such high spirits more than a year before to win glory and renown, but a wan, wasted creature, with wild blue eyes, trembling hands, and fevered lips that babbled incessantly!

Such a wreck, such a shadow of his former self, such an apology for handsome debonaire Guy Leigh, that it was no wonder Squire Lancelot, after embracing him on his return, turned away from the gibbering lunatic, and, hurrying to his study, flung himself into a chair, and, burying his face in his hands, wept bitter tears of chagrin and regret, the first he had ever shed during his prosperous life, the first that had ever fallen from the hard, cold, eyes.

Here was checkmate to his ambitious hopes and plans; a more effectual checkmate than his marriage with Rhona Deverell, the poor despised dependent. That might have been hushed up—concealed; this misfortune it was not possible to hide.

His heir, the man who was to inherit King's Leigh and all the broad acres that lay around, was, to all intents and purposes, an idiot—a hopeless idiot—who gibbered and babbled incessantly in the most foolish manner, and danced with delight if anything pleased him. A bright shawl, a gay-coloured picture, a big dog, anything of that sort took his fancy, just as it would take the fancy of a child.

It could not be concealed; all the world must know it, and the Squire groaned aloud as he saw his castles in the air fall to the ground

with such a crash that nothing could ever build them up again.

"Is it retribution," he murmured, "for my cruelty to her! Yet, no! it cannot be that! I was justified. Surely I was justified in driving her away from here? How dared she, the low-born wench, wed with my son—my boy! the heir to all my proud inheritance; ruining his prospects in life, weighting him down at the outset of his career; weighting him down with the drag of a low-born wife—a woman unrepresentable to society! It was infamous! This is no retribution; it is the result simply of an untoward fate. Paha! Why do I talk like this? If it were all to come over again I should act in the same manner, and drive her forth; and I thank Heaven she is not alive now! It would have added terribly to the complication of affairs had she come demanding her rights. No, it is far better she is at rest." And consoling himself with this reflection, the flinty-hearted old man sat down, and wrote off to several celebrated doctors concerning Guy's mental state.

And the celebrated doctors came and examined the patient, and held a consultation, and one and all came to the conclusion that it was a very bad case—a very bad case—and that it was useless to hold out any hopes of ultimate recovery—either of body or mind!

The whole system had received a shock from which it was not likely to rally. He would never get worse as far as his brain was concerned; he would always remain the same gentle, easily-pleased idiot, but they were of opinion that his bodily health would decrease, his strength gradually lessen and decline until at last he would fade gradually, almost imperceptibly, away, go to join the wife he had loved with all the fervour of early untried youth.

The Squire was wild with grief and disappointment. What was the use of all his money, if he could not purchase a new brain, and a new lease of life for his idolized son? What to him was his high position, his old name, his countless acres? Dead sea fruit! He would have no one to leave them to. No one to perpetuate the ancient name. He must pass away in course of time, and then "his place would know him no more." His children's children would not take his place, inherit his possession. Oh! it was bitter, bitter! Gall and wormwood to the haughty Squire. Like the sharp-edged cross devout nuns wear next their skin, and hug to their bare bosoms, the thoughts stabbed and stabbed him, giving a deep never-healing wound, the smart and pain of which lasted to the last day of his life.

It was so hard to look upon the wreck before him, the wretched object, which had once been a man any father might be proud of, and to see him slowly fading away, gradually becoming weaker, unable to do anything to stay the progress of decay, the fell inroad of disease. Money and skill were alike useless, and it was almost a relief when one bright May morning, four years after his return home, they found him lying still and cold, with the usual sweet, senseless smile on his pale lips, and knew that his earthly troubles were over.

The Squire at first was frantic with grief, and shutting himself up in his study refused either to eat or to drink, and held communication with no one. After a time he came forth from his seclusion, and mixed again with the members of his household, but there was a marked change in him. He looked broken-spirited and careworn. The haughty head drooped, there were lines of pain graven about the mouth. He had the aspect of a man who had no aim or object in life, and was careless of everything.

"You should rouse yourself, Lancelot," observed Miss Jacosta, briskly, one day when he had been more than usually gloomy and depressed, "and take more interest in things."

"What is there to rouse me, interest me?" he asked, almost sullenly.

"The estate, and all the responsibilities that go with it."

"Those don't interest me now. Why should they? In the natural course of events I can only live ten or twelve years longer at the outside. When a man gets to seventy he knows he may be called away at any minute."

"True. Still you have a fine constitution, and there is no reason why you should not live to be ninety, like some of our ancestors, if you don't give way to melancholy."

"If I don't; and pray what is there to prevent me?"

"A great many things."

"What are they. I fail to know of anyone thing that could keep the demon *ennui* from preying upon me now."

"I know of something which would," she rejoined, looking at him keenly.

"Name it, please?" he said, indifferently.

"Guy's child!" she replied, triumphantly.

"Guy's—Guy's child!" he stammered, while the blood flew up to his head, and his features grew so swollen and purple, that his sister rushed to tear off his neckcloth, fearing he was going to have a fit. But, recovering himself, he asked what she meant, somewhat coldly.

"Why, what I mean is this," replied Miss Jacosta, composedly, for she had not looked upon Rhona with such unfavourable eyes as the others with regard to her marriage, remembering, possibly, the dainty caps made by her skilful fingers, and the embroidered altar cloths, and determining to try and get her child its rights. "When Rhona left here she went to Mr. Langhorne's keeper, Somerset, the man who was murdered in Denton Woods some few years back, and his wife took her in. There her child was born, and it lives."

"No!" interrupted the Squire, eagerly, but incredulously.

He knew nothing of the child. He had never mentioned his grandniece's name, or allowed any one else to do so in his hearing, since the day on which she had left the Leigh, so he was in ignorance of its existence; for though he heard of her death casually, he had not troubled to ask if it occurred before or after the birth of the child. With his sister it was different. She heard, through her maid Wilson, that Rhona was at the keeper's cottage; that her child had been born there, and that there she had died. Mrs. Somerset talked freely, after her husband's death, about Guy Leigh's child, so the gossips had spread the news, and Miss Jacosta had seen the baby before it was a year old, and had sent many presents to Mrs. Somerset for the little one.

"Yes!" she continued, calmly, "Somerset's wife brought it up with her own child, and it is now five years old. I should strongly advise you to go and look at it. It is a bonnie little thing."

"I won't!" he shouted, suddenly, with uncontrollable rage. "I won't have anything to do with the brat of that low-born wench, who destroyed my poor boy."

"Just as you please," rejoined Miss Leigh, quietly; and not another word was said about the matter. But in less than a week the Squire found his way to the cottage in the woods. He could not resist the desire to see Guy's child.

The two children were playing on the grass-plot before the door, while the keeper's widow sat under an adjacent tree, making a little frock. She rose with considerable trepidation on seeing the Squire, and stood with downcast eyes and flickering colour, one hand pressed to her heart.

"Good morning, madam!" he said, doffing his hat with old-fashioned courtesy.

"Good morning, sir!" she replied, timidly.

"I suppose you guess what I have come for?" he continued, with some slight embarrassment.

"To see Mrs. Leigh's child, I presume?"

"Exactly so. Which is—is—my grandchild?"

He looked at the children as he spoke at

he boy, who was strong, sturdy, handsome, with his blue eyes, and chestnut hair, and at the girl, pale, delicate, pretty, with golden locks, and large brown eyes.

For a moment Mrs. Somerset hesitated, and then said, "The boy, sir. Lancelot, come here?"

Obediently, the little fellow left the cart he was loading with dead leaves, and came to the woman he regarded as his mother. Fearlessly he looked at the stranger, and as the Squire met the glance of the blue eyes a tremor seized him. They reminded him of those that were closed in death; and, stooping, he lifted him up and kissed the rosy lips. The child seemed to take to him at once—played with his stick, accepted a packet of bonbons from him, and prattled away to him gaily. The little girl, on the contrary, was shy and unacciable, and hid her blonde head in the folds of her mother's dress.

"I am glad it is a boy," said the Squire, as he took his leave. "I prefer them to girls. I shall come and see him again if you have no objection, Mrs. Somerset."

"None, sir," she replied, eagerly. "That is right!" and he took his leave, after giving a bright sovereign to each child.

"The beginning of the end," murmured the widow, after his departure. "This is an earnest of the good things that are to come," and she looked at the money which the children had dutifully handed over to her.

"Lance!" she cried, suddenly, catching him up and pressing him wildly to her breast. "Lance, how would you like to leave me? How would you like to go and live with that gentleman?"

"And he div me gold monies every day?"

"Yes, yes."

"And a big doggie?"

"Yes."

"And a pony to yide?"

"Yes."

"Den I sld like to do and live with him!" announced the young gentleman, in a most decided manner.

"And leave me?" demanded the woman, who held him strained to her breast.

"'Ou tud tum and see me sometimes, couldn't 'ou?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; sometimes."

"Den I sldn't mind leaving 'ou."

"But I should mind parting with you. Oh; my boy, my boy, can I let you go? And yet I must. I have put my hand to the plough; there can be no turning back. I must go on—even to the bitter end, cost what it may!" and giving a hand to each child, she walked slowly to the cottage, and entered it, knowing full well that before long there would be but two inmates under its thatched roof.

CHAPTER VI.

"OH, CHILDHOOD'S HAPPY DAYS"

MRS. SOMERSET was right in her conjecture. Three days later the Squire again visited the little house in the woods. He came laden with parcels full of toys, and sweets; and the moment Lance, who was playing some distance off with Violet, saw him, he jumped up, and tossing down the wild flowers he had gathered, cried,—

"Look, Vi, dere is the nice 'strange man who dave us the gold monies the udder day. Let's do and speak to him. P'raps he'll div us more."

"No, I don't want to go to him," said the little girl, who spoke much more distinctly than her foster-brother, and with wonderful plainness for a child of her age.

"Why not?" demanded her companion, imperiously.

"I—I—don't like him," she faltered.

"He'll div us monies," suggested Lance, insinuatingly, "and p'raps he has sweeties and dollies in that bundle."

"I don't want his sweeties."

"'Ou want a dollie. Tum along," and the

boy held out his hand, but the girl shrank back, a look of fear on her pale face.

"Won't 'ou tum?"

"No, go alone, Lancelot."

"But I want 'ou, too!"

"I can't come."

"Nasty thing," cried Lance, who didn't like his wishes crossed.

"No I am not," she objected, tears filling the soft brown eyes.

"Yes 'ou are."

"No. I—I—I'm afraid of him!" she stammered.

"'Ou're a stupid!"

"He's like that picture of the Yellow Dwarf we saw in the story-book the other day, only his hair is white instead of yellow. And the dwarf was very wicked, you know, and ate little boys and girls, you know."

"Only when dey were naughty," objected the other.

"And we've been naughty," said Vi, in an awestricken tone. "We took the marmalade out of the cupboard this morning, and broke three of mother's new-laid eggs, and she told us not to, you know, so p'raps he's come to punish us."

"Do 'ou think he has?" inquired the boy, gravely.

"I think so," she nodded, with a toss of her flaxen head.

"Den I s'an't do to him," he announced, decidedly, beginning to pick up his discarded blossoms.

But as he spoke the Squire beckoned him, and pointed at a toy gun that he had divested of its wrappings and held in his hand. That proved too great a temptation for the child. He forgot all about Violet's fears, and the Yellow Dwarf and his taste for small, naughty children, and ran off to his grandfather.

"Well, my little man," said the Squire, with a smile that seemed to thaw his frozen features, "do you remember me?"

"Es," replied Lance, boldly; "on're the strange man who dave us gold monies the udder day!"

"That's right. Now give me a kiss."

The child held up his blooming face, and the Squire kissed the soft cheek with a lingering touch of his moustached lips, and held him in his arms for a moment.

"Come and sit on my knee," he said, putting him down, and seating himself on the bench by Mrs. Somerset, who, as usual, was occupied with some piece of work for the children.

"You'll find him heavy, sir!" she marked, with a smile. "He is stout and sturdy."

"I am glad of that," he responded, lifting the child on to his knee, and giving him the gun to play with. "I shouldn't like to see him thin and miserable."

"No."

"He will be a big man, I think, from the shape and size of his limbs."

"You are right, sir. He will, I am sure, unless he gets any illness that affects his general health, and so stunts his growth."

"We must guard against that, to the best of our ability," said the old man, a look of alarm spreading over his face at the mere idea of the child getting ill.

"Yes, of course," assented the woman. "It is very healthy here, and there is hardly any chance of infection from other children in this remote spot!"

"True. Still he may not always remain here."

"True," echoed Kate Somerset.

And then a silence ensued. She was thinking of the time which was swiftly coming, she knew, when she must perforce part with her beloved nurseling.

He was wondering whether the woman at his side would be willing to give up the boy after a while, and what Miss Jocasta would say to his living at the Leigh; whether she would object to having a great, strapping boy, full of fun, and life, and mischief, tramping

through her elegantly tidy rooms, making havoc in the gardens, and robbing the orchards and vinerias, besides doing a hundred other things trying to the nerves and tempers of the elderly.

"Your little girl does not seem to be so sociable as Lance?" he observed at last, breaking the lengthy silence.

"She is not, sir," agreed Mrs. Somerset, glancing at the little one, who was peeping timidly from behind a tree at the stranger, who, to her lively imagination, resembled the dreaded Yellow Dwarf; "she is extremely shy!"

"There is a doll in that package for her!"

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Will she come for it?"

"I will go and fetch her!"

Mrs. Somerset crossed the grass-plot, and reaching the oak behind which Violet hid, proceeded to coax her to come and see their visitor. After a time she consented, and, clinging closely to her mother's skirts, trotted along at her side.

Meanwhile the Squire had undone the waxen baby, and she now lay revealed in all her loveliness of pink muslin and glittering spangles on the bench, being gazed at with extreme admiration by Lance.

"Tiss the strange man, and he'll div 'ou that booful dollie!" he whispered; and thus adjured, and overcome by the magnificence of the puppet, the like of which she had never seen—for Mrs. Somerset's narrow means forbade her providing the children with many playthings—she shyly embraced the stranger, and receiving her present and a package of bon-bons, retired to a safe distance with her foster-brother to examine her treasure.

"They are happy now!" said the Squire, smilingly.

"Yes; they will be fully occupied till bed-time!"

"And that is early, I suppose?"

"Yes; eight o'clock, sir!"

"The evenings must be dull for you!" he remarked.

"They are, rather, in the winter. Still, I make everything for the children, and that keeps me pretty well employed."

"So I should imagine. But you must not work too hard, Mrs. Somerset. It would not be fair to allow you to do that. Here is a trifle, buy anything you want for them with that!" and he pressed a five-pound note into her reluctant hand.

"I hope 'ou'll tome adain soon!" said Lance, clinging to his grandfather's arm as he stooped to kiss him good-bye.

"To be sure I will, and what would you like me to bring you as a present?"

"A lot of doggies, and horses, and piggies in wood!"

"A Noah's Ark—is that what you mean?"

"That is it, sir," interposed his foster-mother.

"Very well; I won't forget!"

"And 'ou'll tome soon?"

"Very soon," returned Squire Lancelot, as he took his leave, and departed through the still leafy woods.

That he did go, again and again to the thatched-roofed house. The magnet which drew him was the boy, the boy that would inherit King's Leigh, and all the broad acres that lay around; the boy who would bear his name, stand in his place, and bear the honours of his position.

His visits made a great difference to the three inmates of the lone cottage. He never came empty-handed, bringing toys, fruit, and dainty things for the children, and almost invariably giving a present of money to Mrs. Somerset, ostensibly for the youngsters, really for herself; and useful, indeed, she found these gifts, and lavishly she spent them on the bairns, especially Violet, whose every wish and whim was studied, and who was in a fair way of becoming a spoilt child, for the Squire never forgot her, and never gave Lance a present without bringing her one as well.

At first his visits were paid secretly, and by stealth, and were short and hurried. After a while they grew longer, and were paid openly, and finally he arrived one morning, accompanied by Miss Jocasta, who had silently waited for her brother to speak—knowing him well, and knowing that it was better to wait till he *did* speak, and not make the suggestion herself—to suggest that the heir, the child in whom their hopes were bound up, should be brought to his proper sphere, removed from the lonely dwelling where he had first seen the light of day, to the palatial home of his forefathers, where he would be surrounded with all the luxury, ease, and splendour, which ought to be his by right of his birth.

It came at last, the moment she had silently waited for. She had been over to St. Jude's to superintend the arrangement of a new altar cloth, a present from herself, and to pray a little with her pet vicar; and the charms of his society made her forget how time was passing, and consequently, late for dinner.

She tumbled into her black velvet and point lace in a tremendous hurry, tore her mittens putting them on, and never noticed that the maid perched her cap on her iron-grey locks in a crooked fashion. Still, notwithstanding all her haste, the hands of the clock pointed to half-past seven as she entered the drawing-room, and their dinner hour was seven, and the Squire hated unpunctuality.

"I am so very sorry," she began, apologetically, "I had no idea it was so late, and I was exceedingly busy at St. Jude's."

"It does not matter in the least," he said, graciously, offering her his arm, and leading her to the dining-room.

"It does, indeed," she objected. "The mistress of the house should never set a bad example."

"You don't often," he remarked, as he peppered his soup.

"Not often. Still, to keep meals waiting is unpardonable, I think. You must be famished?"

"No. I am only comfortably hungry."

"I am glad of that."

"And how is Maxwell?" (her pet vicar).

"Fairly well. Rather overworked."

"Indeed! you surprise me?"

There was marked incredulity in the Squire's tone.

"Why?"

"I hardly thought Maxwell was the sort of man to overwork himself."

"He does. He is a true Christian."

"That may be so; still, as he is wealthy, and has two curates, and a not very thickly-populated parish, I quite fail to see the necessity for the overwork."

"It is a labour of love."

"And fox-hunting also. Eh?" chuckled her brother.

"Everyone must have their recreations," she retorted, sharply, for she could not bear to hear his questionable behaviour criticised.

"Of course, of course," assented the Squire, as though wishing to conciliate her. "No man is the worse for a gallop after the red rogue, a shot at the grouse, or an angle in a well-stocked stream."

"That is my opinion," announced with extreme severity.

"And mine also."

"I am glad we agree on this subject," she declared, her features relaxing into a grim sort of smile.

"Quite so, and I hope we shall agree on another," he responded, quickly and urbanely.

"What is that?" she asked, darting a keen glance at him.

"One that is very near my heart," he said, slowly, as the butler, after placing the fruit on the table, and the decanters before his master, withdrew with the other servants.

"Yes!" interrogatively.

"I have a proposal to make that I trust will find favour in your eyes."

"Doubtless it will," she answered, briskly. "It will entail trouble on you, and responsibility."

"I shall not mind that," she returned, graciously, for her quick woman's wit enabled her to guess what was coming.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Could you put up with the trouble and possible annoyance of a young child in the house?"

"Easily, if that child were our poor, dear Guy's."

"Then—you guess what my proposal is, Jocasta?"

"Yes. You wish to bring little Lance here, and rear him under your own eyes, give him all the benefit of your wealth and position?"

"I do. Am I right or wrong, think you?"

"Right, decidedly. The child should not be deprived of the advantages that ought to be his."

"I am so glad you agree with me," he said, giving a sigh of relief.

"Did you think I would not?"

"I hardly knew. It is with considerable hesitation that I have broached the subject to you."

"You need not have hesitated."

"So I see now."

"And I wish you had not."

"And I also, as we could have had him with us during the past six months."

"You have seen him often, I suppose?"

"Very often. And have learnt to love him almost more fondly than I loved his poor father."

"That is natural. You see that is all we have left."

"All! Oh, Jocasta, some of my lost youth seems to come back to me as I watch the boy gambling at my feet, feel the touch of his fresh, young lips, and meet the glance of his blue eyes."

"I don't wonder at that. We must make arrangements to have him here soon."

"Yes. I thought we might go over there to-morrow, and see about it."

"We will. I hope Mrs. Somerset will prove amenable."

CHAPTER VII.

"OH, LOVE! WITH THOSE SOFT, CLOSE LASHES."

MISS JOCASTA was a sensible woman, and entered at once into all the Squire's plans for little Lance's future. She got ready early the next morning, and drove down with him to the edge of the wood, where they alighted, and walked through the russet leaves that carpeted the earth thickly, to the cottage.

Mrs. Somerset's handsome face, grew crimson at the sight of them, and then deadly pale, and her shapely hands trembled like aspen leaves.

It had arrived then, the time for which she had longed, and yet dreaded; the time when she must give up the boy she had nursed, the winsome, bonnie, little fellow she loved so well, who had wound himself into her best affections, until parting with him was like having to tear the very heart from her breast, and live, or rather exist, without it.

Still it had to be done. She must yield him up to those who could urge a superior claim, and so she listened as calmly as she could to Squire Lancelot, as he unfounded his plans, and told her that he had come to take his grandchild to his rightful home.

"I am sorry to deprive you of him," he said, with wonderful softness, as he looked at the sturdy little fellow careering around the grass-plot astride his stick; "but he is all I have—all that is left of my boy, my Guy. My hopes centre in him. You have suffered, Mrs. Somerset; you know what it is to pine, and grieve, to long for the 'touch of a vanished hand,' the sound of a voice which is hushed for aye, the sight of a face which lies under the green sod. You know, you can feel for me, I am growing old and weary, life has

seemed a burden of late. This child will lift part of the load from my shoulders. In him I shall live again. There will be new interests for me, new ties. The depression—the melancholy—will leave me. I shall grow young again. You understand?" he turned his eyes almost imploringly on her as he spoke.

"Yes, yes!" she assented, in a choked voice, "I understand."

"Perhaps you will think," he continued, "that I have been tardy in claiming him. Yet it is not so. I was unaware of his existence six months ago, and in less than a week after I heard of his birth I was here. I did not suggest taking him away at first, as I knew it would pain you; but of course you must have known that I meant to do so, and have accustomed yourself to contemplate parting with him. Is it not so?"

"Yes," she assented again, more faintly.

"That is right," he said, with cordial and kind approval. Since Guy's death much of his harsh sternness had passed away. He was changed for the better, being gentler, more humane, more considerate of the feelings of others. "Your good care of him shall not go unrewarded. Here are two hundred pounds. I beg of you to accept this sum as a little token of my obligation to you." He held out a cheque to the keeper's widow, who looked at it, blushed scarlet, and then seized it, looking at the child Violet, who, as usual at the approach of strangers, was clinging to her skirts, and murmuring—

"For her—for her sake!"

"Yes," agreed the Squire, good-humouredly, "for her, if you wish it to be so. My boy's foster-sister must share some of the benefits that will be his."

"Thank you, thank you kindly," faltered the woman, brokenly.

"And now can you get him ready? I should like to take him back to-day."

"To-day!" she gasped, "so soon? Must I give him up so soon?"

"Yes, I think so. You had better get the pain of parting over at once. It will be better for the child to enter into his new life now than at a later period, and you can come and see him at the Leigh. I put no restrictions on you."

"Thank you, thank you, sir, for that," she cried, gratefully.

"Lance," he called, raising his voice, at which the boy galloped up to him at once, "how would you like to leave your mother and come and live with me, in the big house on the hill?"

"I sud like to live in de big house with 'ou," he announced at once, "but I tant leave mammy. She'd k without me," and he slipped his tiny hand into hers, and pressed his curly head against her knee.

"But you must, my sweet," she whispered, stooping down over the bright face, "you must. You will be better off there."

"I won't do without 'ou," he objected, sturdily.

"I will come and see you often," she responded, coaxingly, pleading against herself, while every instinct in her being urged her to clasp him to her breast, and never let him leave her.

"Very often?" he demanded, fixing his beautiful blue eyes on her face.

"Yes, yes! And you will have a big doggie to play with, and a pony to ride, and—and white mice, and all sorts of pretty things."

"And Violet, will she come too?"

"Of course," interposed the Squire. "Your sister shall come and play with you whenever you wish, and you shall drive to the big house now in a carriage drawn by two ponies."

"Then I'll do," he decided, adding with a quaint wisdom far beyond his years, "and if I don't like it I'll come home again."

"Of course," acquiesced his grandfather.

And so it was settled; and Lance, after kissing and being kissed very fondly by his foster-mother and sister, and escorted by them to the edge of the woods, drove off in great style with his new relations in the pony

phaeton; and after watching them till a turn in the road hid them from view, Kate Somerset turned slowly homewards, carrying Violet in her arms, and on the little one's pale face rained down a perfect storm of tears, shed from eyes that were heavy and sad with remorse and grief.

Lance's life at the Leigh was a very different thing to what it had been at the keeper's cottage. He was a king in a small way, monarch of all he surveyed, master of many obedient slaves, and the most obedient and most humble of them all was his grandfather, and, next to him, Miss Jocasta. They never seemed able to make half enough of Guy's son. Nothing was denied him. His word was law, and when he made a request or issued an order, which he occasionally did in his free, winsome way, everyone flew to gratify his wishes, and fulfil his commands. He was very much petted and spoiled, but it did not seem to affect him in any way. He was unfailingly good-tempered and cheerful, sturdy and independent to a degree, and fond of being much in the open air. His chief delight was to ride about on a long-tailed, long-maned, black pony, with which Miss Jocasta presented him on his sixth birthday, and very often he rode down to the cottage in the woods, and spent some hours with the inmates there, getting his sodate grey-headed groom to hold tiny Violet on to his pony, while he took the bridle and led it, and Kate Somerset, with her sad face and wistful eyes, would walk beside him, gazing at him hungrily.

She had changed since he had left—the apple of her eye, the joy of her life. Her face was pale and pinched, eyes wild and restless, like those of one who had slept little, and kept long night watches. That she grieved for her nursing no one could doubt; and yet Miss Jocasta and others who knew her well, wondered that her sorrow was so great, for she saw him often.

Regularly every Saturday she came by invitation to the Leigh, and brought Violet with her. It was a red-letter day for the children. They played together, and built obby-houses, and harnessed Monarch, the great Mount St. Bernard, to a cart in which first one sat and then the other, for they always shared everything between each other in the most correct and equal manner, and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Only little Violet always wept when the time of parting came, and invariably called upon Lance to "come home," an invitation which he politely yet firmly declined, alleging that he could not possibly leave his grandfather; a reason which did not seem to satisfy the young lady.

To Mrs. Somerset these days were a sort of "sweet sorrow." She was treated very kindly by both the Squire and his sister, who always made a point of seeing her, and chatting with her about the child. Then she was regaled in quite a grand fashion in the housekeeper's room, and finally sent home with her little daughter under the care of Tigges the gardener or Jem the groom, and a basket of fruit, jellies or other dainties.

Still this did not seem to satisfy her. Day after day she would loiter where she thought the young heir was likely to pass, and if he went on his way not seeing her stand straining her eyes till his figure became indistinct in the distance, or when he chanced to see her, would fly to him and kiss him again and again, until his nurse, if she had dared, would have told her to be off, and mind her own business and look after her own child; but she did not dare, as she, in common with all the other servants had received strict injunctions to treat Mrs. Somerset with the utmost respect, and on all occasions to let her have free access to Master Leigh. And so she waited, and watched for, and kissed the boy who had nursed day after day, month after month, year after year, and her features grew more and more wan, and her eyes sadder and sadder, her step slower and slower, until there was not a vestige of her old good looks left, and she was a mere

wreck of bonnie blooming Kate Dewsberry, the belle of Denton.

Keen-eyed, far-seeing Miss Jocasta often wondered what ailed the woman. Some secret grief seemed consuming her.

"I can't understand it," she observed, one day to the Squire.

"Can't understand what?" he demanded. "Mrs. Somerset fretting so much at parting with Lance. If he were her own child she could not have taken it more to heart; indeed, I don't think she would have taken it so much. I actually believe she is fonder of him than she is of Violet."

"Quite likely, and it is hardly to be wondered at. He is by far the finer child, and, then, is more winsome and taking. The girl is such a shy, timid creature. She seems terrified if one only looks at her."

"She is terrified at you, for some unknown reason."

"Yes. I can't imagine why, for I always give her bonbons when she is here, but she runs away and hides behind her mother."

"Her fear of you is really extraordinary. With me she is quite different."

"It is strange. She is fond of her mother."

"Oh, yes. Adores her, and Mrs. Somerset is intensely fond of her."

"I am glad to hear that. Poor woman, I feel that I robbed her when I took away her nursing. Mind, Jocasta, that she sees him whenever she wishes to do so, and let him go to the cottage on every opportunity. In a way he belongs to her, and I would not deny her the pleasure of seeing him. I can feel for her. I remember what I suffered when I lost Guy,"

and taking up his whip, the Squire went out, and mounting his horse rode round the estate with Lance. He had been a different man since the child came to live at the Leigh. The languor and indifference of his manner vanished, and gave place to briek energy; the keen eyes grew brighter, the hard lines about his lips relaxed, the bent shoulders straightened; he looked ten years younger, and seemed to regain some of his lost youth, as he chatted with the child in whom all his hopes centred, entering into all his plans, and indulging him to the top of his bent.

They got on wonderfully well together—grandfather and grandson. Despite the boy's natural independence, he was ever obedient and deferential to the Squire's wishes, and was truly attached to him.

As he grew older the Squire had a tutor for him, though he felt he ought to send him to Eton or Harrow, and afterwards to Oxford or Cambridge, as his father had been. But the old man could not bear to part with him, so the young fellow remained at home, and grew more dexterous in the use of a fowling piece than he did in the use of a Latin grammar. Still, though he was not very learned, at eighteen he was a fine manly youth, with a clear, brilliant blue eye, a handsome face, and a winning manner—just the sort of man to win a maiden's heart, and he had won one, though so young in years. It was that of his foster-sister, Violet Somerset.

He was the only man in the whole world for her. There could not be one more noble, more generous, more perfectly perfect in her eyes, and he knew this and returned her affection. They had been thrown much together, and the result was that a tender, true love sprang up in their young hearts for each other.

A pretty sight it was to see them come up the dell, where the new grass was springing, and the violets shedding their perfume on the air, and the trees leafing apace, together, hand-in-hand.

He tall, strong, sturdy; she slight, delicate, indescribably beautiful, with a skin like alabaster, masses of dead golden hair, and great liquid brown eyes, fringed so thickly with "soft close-lashes" of densest black that they looked like two limpid pools encircled by rushes.

Mrs. Somerset, sitting in the porch, watched

them coming, and murmured a "God bless them" with her pale lips. Lance had come to ask how she was; her strength had failed sadly of late, she had not been able to get up to the Leigh, so his visits were doubly welcome.

"Mother," he asked tenderly, as he kissed her soft cheek, "how are you to-day?"

"A little weaker. I fear, Lance, I shall never get strong again," she made reply, her wistful eyes fixed on his face with a yearning look.

"Don't say that," he said, cheerily. "You have all the summer before you to get strong in, and I have some news that will please you."

"What is that?" she queried.

"Can't you guess?" and he shot a look at his blushing love.

"No, tell me!"

"Violet has promised to be my own dear little wife!" and as he spoke he drew her into his strong arms. "Have we your consent and blessing, mother?"

"Yes, yes, my children. Heaven bless you, Heaven bless you!" she cried, and looking up at the blue sky, murmured, "Heaven will right the wrong. Then my prayers and tears have not been in vain."

The Squire? she asked a moment later, while a look of dread and fear swept across her pallid face. "Have you his consent?"

"Not yet. He will not refuse it, though."

"Do not be too sure. Oh! my boy, my boy, if he should not give it."

"He will, no fear. He has never refused me anything yet."

"I dread your asking him."

"Nay, dear mother, do not distress yourself. I will go now, and before sundown I shall be back bearing his consent to our union," and away he sped, fleet as a deer, followed by the gaze of two pairs of loving eyes.

Just as the crimson glow of sunset was fading from the distant hills he returned, with down-drooped head, and lagging step; his errand had been useless. Gently, yet firmly, the Squire refused his consent. He had other views for him, and knowing what he owed him, Lance felt he could not marry Violet without his consent, or while he lived, and he dreaded giving pain to the two gentle creatures he loved best in all the world. For a moment he hesitated on the threshold, and then, throwing the door open, walked into the little parlour where they were sitting.

"He has refused!" ejaculated Mrs. Somerset, as she saw his face.

"Yes, he has refused," answered Lance, moodily, and with one great cry of "Oh, Heaven! my sin recoils on my own head," she fell senseless at his feet, the blood gushing from her livid lips.

"She is dying, she is dying!" shrieked Violet, distractedly.

"No, no!" replied her lover. "Help me to get her upstairs; and then, Ellen, I will go for the doctor. It is only a fainting fit."

Tenderly the young people raised the prostrate form, and bore it upstairs; and then, without waiting a moment, Lance dashed off for a medical man, who had set up in a rising village some five miles distant. In an incredibly short space of time he returned with the doctor, who, after much trouble, restored consciousness, and partly stopped the hemorrhage.

"Doctor," she whispered faintly, "how long can I live? Tell me the truth; don't deceive a dying woman."

"From twelve to twenty-four hours," he replied, thus adjured.

"My time is short, and I have so much to do. Ah! Heaven! Give me strength and time to right the wrong I have done. I must see the Squire. Lance, go fetch the Squire. I must see him."

Without a word the young man, though faded and weary, set out to swiftly tramp the four miles that lay between the cottage and

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the Leigh, and bring his grandsire to the deathbed.

A look of fear leapt into the old man's eyes when he heard her message. What would it be she had to tell him?

An ugly fancy crept into his mind, and a wild pain tugged at his heartstrings as he drove rapidly to the cottage.

"You have sent for me, you want me?" he said, as he stood at the bedside, where she lay with closed lids, looking like death itself.

"Yes!" she answered, opening her eyes at the sound of his voice. "I have something to tell you. It must be alone. Send the others away."

"Give her this cordial if she appears on the point of sinking," said the doctor, as he departed with Lance and Violet, who went very reluctantly.

"Now!" said the Squire, "we are alone. What is it you have to tell me?" and his eyes sought hers with a troubled look of dread.

"Much, much!" she murmured, faintly. "There is much to tell. I have done a great wrong, sinned grievously."

"And this sin is?" he asked breathlessly.

"That I have deceived you. Lancelot is not your son's son."

"Wretch!" almost shrieked the old man, "how could you do this thing? How dared you do it?"

"It was the outcome of a mother's love," she answered, shrinking from the blaze of the flashing eyes, "the desire of a mother to further the interests of her offspring."

"He is your son, then?" foamed the Squire, "infamous woman, I wonder you dare to confess your crime."

"Pardon, pardon!" she moaned. "I was tempted. The idea was put into my head by another!"

"And this other was—"

"Rhona!" she interrupted. "Your son's wife!"

"And her child is dead?"

"No, Violet is her child. But listen, my time is short; I will tell you all. When you drove your daughter-in-law from the Leigh (her listener winced here) she came to me in her distress, and I took her in and gave her shelter. A short time after my child was born, a healthy, sturdy boy; and ten days later her babe came into the world prematurely, a sickly, delicate girl. Her grief was terrible when she found out it was not a boy, as she knew you could keep a girl from inheriting King's Leigh if you chose, while male issue must succeed to the estates, and her craving for revenge against you was strong, even in death. She whispered to me to change the children, saying that the advantages would be all for my boy, and that she would rather have her child brought up by me than by those who had shown her scant mercy. In an evil hour I listened. She made me swear to do her will, and died rejoicing at my having promised to do so. Still, I might not have done this wrong, only circumstances conduced to it. My husband and Nurse Diggorry, the only two people who knew about the children beside myself, died in a few months, and I was left free to carry out the fell design if I chose. I fought against the temptation, and thrust it away from me, but the idea would steal back with relentless persistency. She was timid, quiet—would be content with little, I knew. He was bold, bright, fearless—one who could enjoy all the good things of life, just fitted, I felt, when he grew to manhood to manage an estate, and interest himself in all matters appertaining to it. Then he was certain to succeed to your lands, while she might not have done so, as they are only entailed from father to son or grandson, and; failing male issue, may be left by the possessor to whom he pleases. So when you came and asked for your grandchild I let you think he belonged to you—let my cherished one go from me! But I have suffered. Oh! how I have suffered! My sin has killed me! Squire, can you forgive me the wrong I have done?"

"Do not ask me!" he answered, hoarsely,

lifting his haggard face. "Think what you have done! Robbed my few declining years of all joy! I loved this boy—Heaven! how I loved him for himself—and because he was all, I thought, that remained to me of my poor Guy! Now you tell me he is not mine, that a timid girl to whom I am indifferent must take his place—drive him forth from my heart and home!"

"That need not be!" she said, eagerly. "He need not leave you!"

"What do you mean?"

"Let this marriage between them take place; that will right the wrong, and you can still keep him with you. Don't let any thought of the difference of birth influence you," she continued, as he made a gesture of dissent.

"He is her equal. My husband was Oswald Somerset Pelham, youngest son of Sir Julian Pelham. He accidentally killed a man in a drunken brawl at Naples, and, fearing punishment, returned to this country and hid himself here, under the guise of keeper to Mr. Langhorne. You know my history, so you see they are equals. Grant my prayer, I beseech you! Do not wreck their young lives!"

"Let me think," he muttered, burying his face in his hands.

After a while he looked up.

"Do you consent?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, I consent," he replied, slowly and heavily, like one waking from a long sleep.

"Bless you! bless you for that! And there is one more request I have to make," she gasped, for the end was drawing nigh, and her breathing becoming shorter and shorter.

"What is it?"

"No—good—can come—of—telling them—the truth, as they are to marry. Not a soul—but yourself will know—the secret—of their parentage—when I am gone. Let it remain—a secret. Do not let my boy—curse the—mother whose sin—was the outcome—of her great love for him. Promise you will not tell. Promise—I beseech you!"

The glazing eyes fastened on his face, and almost against his will he uttered the words which bound him to keep the secret.

As he spoke the death-rattle sounded in her throat, and though he threw open the door at once, and called loudly for the others, Violet, when she rushed to the bedside, took into her arms a corpse.

The Squire was faithful to his promise. He never told the timid girl, who seemed to inherit some of her mother's fear of him, that she was his grand-daughter, and Lance nothing to him, and a year later, when they were married—to Miss Jocasta's great joy, at the quaint ivy-grown church on the Leigh estate, by the Rev. Hugh Copeland Maxwell, grown fatter, and balder, and more antique, still handsome in her eyes, though—the young man in joyful ignorance of the truth, thought he was endowing his bride with much wealth, and many earthly possessions, and was quite unconscious that he was not the Squire's grandson.

[THE END.]

THE RECEPTIVE FACULTY NEEDS CONSTANT CULTIVATION. In the very earliest years it may be trained and developed. Children are, it is true, always receiving, but few are taught how to receive. They can be accustomed to habits of observation and attention, to sentiments of sympathy and gratitude, to a sense of responsibility for the use of what is conferred upon them. The same dew that falls upon a stone falls also upon the thirsty flower; but the stone is unchanged by its presence, while the flower eagerly drinks it up and draws from it fresh vitality for its own growth. So good influences are everywhere abroad, falling alike on the callous and the sensitive, on those who are scarcely conscious of them, and those who welcome them with eagerness, use them with intelligence, and draw from them ever new and fresh vital power.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.—(continued.)

They toiled up the gloomy road, and approached Sorel Place. Sir Richard turned into the little lane, now drearier and more desolate than ever in the lonely night-time, and Hellice clung more closely to him, and even Mr. Haughton walked nearer to his side, as if feeling a desire for close companionship.

"What a dreary old place," said Hellice.

"How dark the house is! There is no light!"

"Because it is nearly three o'clock in the morning!" replied the Baronet. "It was past two when they entered the bay, and it took some time to land, to pay off the men, and to walk up here. It must be quite three! The people in the house live at the back. We must go round there, if we wish to make our presence known!"

He led the way round to the rear of the old mansion.

The back-garden was dark, with thick growing trees, but the branches and leaves were plainly revealed by a light that streamed from an upper window.

"Some one is up at this hour!" said Sir Richard, pausing, and looking up. "They are early risers here. How fortunate!"

"It is a barred window!" said Hellice, wonderingly.

The three paused in a compact group, continuing to look upward. They fancied they heard the sound of voices in contention, and curiosity held them motionless.

At last Sir Richard said,—

"How thoughtless I am to keep you standing here, when you are so tired. I will knock—"

The words yet trembled on his lips when a form appeared at the upper window, a pane of glass was dashed out, and Lady Redwoode's despairing shriek rang out on the horrified air. The light behind her showed her white, despairing face and flowing hair.

"Lady Redwoode!" cried Sir Richard, involuntarily.

"Mother!" murmured Hellice, with uncontrollable joy, as she held her arms upward.

"It is Lady Redwoode—alive!" cried the Baronet, almost paralyzed at his discovery.

"Alive! and here!"

Again that wild shriek rang out upon the night air.

Sir Richard shouted incoherently to the helpless prisoner, rushed to the kitchen-door, but finding it locked, he then dashed in a window, leaping through the aperture, and disappeared within the house.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Reason raise o'er instinct as you can.

In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man.

—Pope.

WHILE that second appalling shriek yet lingered on Lady Redwoode's lips, her startled persecutors sprang forward and dragged her from the window. Luke Jensen, clutching his prisoner closely by the arm, hoarsely directed his mother to let down a curtain, an order which she tremblingly obeyed, muttering that it should have been done before, but that her mind had been too disturbed to allow her to think of it. The curtain lowered, and all possible discovery from that point averted, Jensen demanded gruffly of his parent,—

"Have you looked the door?"

"I was just going to do so," responded the woman, crossing the floor. "Her ladyship's screams made me forget it. Luke, don't you think we'd better wait till to-morrow night? It's almost morning, and I'm that scared now, that you could knock me over with a feather. Suppose some one should come—"

"Tisn't necessary to s'pose so. That lawyer'll be here in the morning, sure as fate! Now or never's my motto. Lock the door, and let's have the business over."

"The Baroness clasped her hands, not in entreaty to her enemy, but in prayer to Him who holds in his hands the issues of life and death. She had no hope of life now. One glance at the fierce, determined face of Jenson dispelled any half-formed thought of appealing to his mercy. She strove, therefore, to resign herself to her untimely fate.

Mrs. Jenson made no farther appeals in behalf of the helpless captive. She was persuaded that her son was right, and that both would be safer with their prisoner dead. She approached the door, her hand trembled on the key.

At that juncture came to the ears of both persecutors and prisoner the sound of a heavy, unsteady tramping on the old stairs.

The mother and son stared at each other in sudden and wild affright.

Lady Redwoode looked at the door, which still remained unlocked, startled, eager, and flushed with awakening hope.

The next moment the door was flung open, and Sir Richard Haughton strode into the room.

One eagle glance sufficed to make him comprehend the whole tableau.

His blue eyes flashed lightning as they beheld the half-kneeling figure of the Baroness, her arm still held in the firm but now unconscious clasp of Luke Jenson, whose brutal face was frozen into an expression of the most terrible alarm.

Mrs. Jenson stood near the door, having been pushed aside at the Baroness's entrance. Her attitude was cowering, and she broke out immediately into tears, and deprecating lamentations, meant to influence the intruder into a belief of her non-complicity with her son.

The mother and son recognized Sir Richard at once, as having been one of the party who had visited Sorel Place and the vicinity, after the supposed death of Lady Redwoode.

The Baroness recognised him with incredulous joy.

"Sir Richard!" she screamed, her voice freighted with sudden exultation, gratitude and amazement.

The Baroness bounded towards her, his eyes fairly blazing. He struck from her arm the hand of Luke Jenson. With another blow he sent the ruffian reeling to the opposite side of the room.

And then, with infinite tenderness, such as a son might feel towards a good and gentle mother, he raised the form of Lady Redwoode, gathered her to his manly breast, and with loving assurances told her she was safe.

His words fell on unheeding ears. The Baroness had fainted from excess of joy. Sir Richard laid her upon the bed, and began to chafe her hands in the endeavour to restore her to consciousness.

Mrs. Jenson and Luke, thus momentarily forgotten, exchanged significant glances, and moved towards the door with a view of escape.

Their hopes were frustrated, however, by the appearance of Mr. Haughton and Hellice, who had hastened on in the footsteps of the Baroness, arriving in time to play an important part in the drama.

"Oh, Richard! Is she dead?" cried Hellice, hastening to the bedside.

"My darling, no! Sprinkle her face with water while I chafe her hands. She has only fainted."

The maiden hastened to second her lover's exertions, bathing the white and rigid face, calling upon her ladyship with tears to arouse herself, seeming to know exactly what to do, and having sufficient self-possession to do it skilfully and quickly.

While the lovers were thus engaged, Mr. Haughton, comprehending intuitively that the Jensons were the enemies and persecutors of Lady Redwoode, quietly closed the door behind him, placed himself against it, and displayed a formidable-looking pistol, while he glared menacingly at the guilty couple.

As may be imagined, they were reduced to instant and abject submission.

"Dare to make a movement of escape, and

your fate is sealed!" declared Mr. Haughton, with the manner of one issuing a terrible ukase from which there could be no appeal. "I've a good mind to shoot you both down. Sit down! Sit down, I say, on the floor!"

The Jensons immediately assumed the required positions, being too cowardly to attempt to brave or elude their conqueror, who maintained a close watch upon them, ready, as he said, to execute vengeance upon either.

While this scene was occurring, Lady Redwoode was being won back to consciousness. The breath came and went through her parted lips. Her eyes slowly opened, and her gaze wandered from Sir Richard to Hellice.

At sight of the latter she was herself again.

She struggled to an upright posture, and, as she did so, Hellice retreated a few steps, the memory of Lady Redwoode's suspicions against her recurring to her mind with crushing force. The consciousness of the double accusation against her came back to her, and she felt distressed and humiliated. She stood, pale and downcast, with folded hands and drooping figure.

"Hellice!" said the Baroness, her voice as sweet, low and tender as the voice of an angel.

The East Indian girl looked up, her face brightening with the glow of an oriental sunrise. Her dark eyes were like great caverns of light. Her scarlet lips quivered with sensitive feeling. Her lithe and slender figure became erect, and she half opened her arms, unconsciously to herself.

The tender utterance of her name had transformed her into a loving, glowing, passionate being, and she waited, half-expectant of the realization of the precious hope that had been born in her hour of greatest sorrow.

She had not long to wait.

Her eyes, her look, her attitude, brought back to the Baroness the memory of the husband of her youth. She saw in Hellice a fair and delicate copy of that post-lover whose untimely death she had so long mourned. The truth that had come to her soul with Jenson's words quickened in her heart. She arose, eager and impassioned, and stretched out her arms, crying,—

"Come to me, Hellice. My child! My daughter! You are mine—my own!"

With a great cry of joy, Hellice sprang to that embrace, and was folded to the heart which she had so recently believed would never warm to her.

We will not linger on the blissful recognition of the holy relationship between those two, so unlike each other, yet so equally lovely.

It was all made plain to Hellice, through caresses and incoherent words, that Cecile's unworthiness had at last convinced the heart and reason of the Baroness that she had chosen wrongly between the two girls, and that the troubled instinct of her ladyship, like a fluttering bird, had at last settled down to be no more disturbed.

"I have been blind—blind!" said Lady Redwoode, with infinite self-reproach. "It was my own child I met so coldly on her coming home! It was my own child to whom I refused my love, whom I believed bad and unworthy, whom I expelled from my home and presence, whom I drove out upon the world! I can never forgive myself—never! I shall carry my remorse down to my grave. But, Hellice, daughter of my youth, can you ever forgive me and love me? Have I chilled your heart into an eternal coldness?"

For answer, Hellice looked up into that lovely face with happy eyes, and whispered the one word,—

"Mother!"

It was enough. By the tenderness with which it was breathed, Lady Redwoode knew that the maiden's heart had welcomed her with more than filial love.

"Sir Richard," said the Baroness, with a beaming smile, "you were true throughout all to Hellice. You declared your knowledge of her innocence, when suspicions were most rife against her. You have found her when I deemed her lost to us for ever. I cannot bear

in this hour the thought of parting from her, but I must not forget that you have a right to her, as sacred as mine. I cannot part from her, but you shall be my son!"

She placed the maiden's hand in his, and looked upon them both with maternal pride and tenderness.

"And now," she said, a few minutes later, "let us go away from this old place. The very air is oppressive to me here. Take me away, Sir Richard, at once. Will you not?"

The Baroness assented. Hellice assisted her mother to arise, for she had set down again, too excited to stand, and threw around her the Indian shawl which Mr. Haughton had carried.

Lady Redwoode shook hands with the poor gentleman, who did not relax his vigilant watch upon his prisoners, even when congratulating her ladyship upon her happy escape.

"We will attempt to walk on to the village," said Sir Richard. "About this couple—"

"I will guard them while you send some constables from the village!" said Mr. Haughton, briefly.

"Oh, no," cried Mrs. Jenson, fairly groveling on the floor at Mr. Haughton's feet. "Oh, let us go. We are not so much to blame. We were led away, indeed we were. We will confess all—"

"Hush, mother!" interrupted Luke, who had worked himself into a sullen mood, assuring himself that his fate, whatever it might be, would be shared by Mr. Forsythe and Cecile.

"I won't hush," screamed Mrs. Jenson, half beside herself with fear, the prison and gallows looming up before her frenzied imagination. "Luke and me are not the ones to blame. We shouldn't have tried to poison her ladyship to-night, only them Forsythes and that Indian woman put Luke up to it. You can see for yourselves that we were only cats-paws to them, for Luke has got the bottle in his pocket now!"

Luke produced the empty Indian phial that had been given him by Renee, and Sir Richard examined it with wonder and loathing.

"Twan't Luke and me that tried to drown her ladyship," exclaimed Mrs. Jenson, appealingly. "The young lady, Mrs. Forsythe, upset the boat purposely. She and her husband hired Luke not to pick Lady Redwoode up. We'll make a full confession, if you'll let us off—"

"I have heard enough!" declared Lady Redwoode, sternly. "I understand the whole story. You are safe, both of you, for I cannot punish you without bringing in the names of my niece and nephew. I leave you to your own consciences, and to a Judge wiser than those of earth!"

She took Sir Richard's arm, and the Baroness aroused herself from his amazement, and conducted her and Hellice from the room.

Mr. Haughton, muttering his discontent at this phase of affairs, and vainly wishing that he could have foreseen this emergency, and provided himself with an infernal machine, suitable to the annihilation of the mother and son, with their employers, lingered a moment to flourish his pistol in their faces, and to intimidate them with threats, in which, having succeeded to his satisfaction, he hastened down stairs after his friends. He rejoined them in the lower hall, and accompanied them from the house.

The fresh air gave the Baroness both strength and courage. She leaned on Sir Richard's arm, and Hellice walked beside her, her hand clasped in her mother's, and her heart overflowing with peace and joy.

The maiden's dreams were realized at last—love and tenderness were enfolding her as they never had before—and her happiness was so intense and exquisite that it was almost akin to pain. Words cannot speak the ineffable joy that filled the mother's heart.

It is enough to say that that hour more than repaid her for all her sorrows, anxieties, and inquietudes. She could hardly keep her eyes from the girl's face, and her wonder was great indeed that she had never comprehended the glad truth of her identity until now.

The little party proceeded down the shadowy lane and into the road, which was plainly visible in the early dawn. They walked slowly onward, not pausing until Sorel Place had been left out of sight, and then the Baronet induced his charges to sit down under a roadside tree to rest, fearing to overtax the strength of Lady Redwoode.

"I tell you, this isn't exactly the thing," said Mr. Haughton, decidedly. "Lady Redwoode ought not to walk so far as the village, and Hellice is tired, I know, with being up all night. If my private steam-carriage had been permitted to arrive at perfection, and if it were here at this moment—But we won't waste time in vain regrets. I'll go on to the village, and procure a carriage and come back to meet you. In the meantime, you can walk leisurely, or sit still, as you prefer."

This offer was accepted, and Mr. Haughton set out at once at a brisk pace that promised well for his speedy return.

Sir Richard arranged a comfortable seat upon a heavy stone for the ladies, and they took possession of it. Then, with eager inquiries, he and Hellice gained from the Baroness the strange story of her adventures, interrupting her now and then to give vent to their astonishment and indignation. The maiden nestled close to her ladyship, finding frequent occasion for eloquence and tender caresses.

"The wretches!" ejaculated the Baronet, when Lady Redwoode had finished. "You are right, Lady Redwoode. Cecile is not your child, and Hellice is. You remember I told you of my convictions to that effect weeks ago!"

"Where have you been all this time, my child?" asked the Baroness, with a fondness she had never felt or exhibited towards Cecile.

In response, Hellice told her story, beginning with her arrival at Holly Bank. Mr. Anchoester's singular persecution seemed to afford Lady Redwoode considerable food for thought. She listened with vivid interest to the description of the interrupted marriage, the maiden's fortification of the Rookery, the subsequent flight through the woods, the refuge at the manse, the bold abduction thence, the opportune rescue by Sir Richard, the chase at sea, and Mr. Anchoester's final relinquishment of pursuit, saying, when Hellice had concluded with the discovery of her ladyship at Sorel Place,—

"I see the hand of Providence through it all, Hellice. How strangely you have been preserved through all your perils! I cannot praise you enough for your courage, your resoluteness, and your presence of mind. What could have sustained you throughout those dangers?"

"A trust in a higher Power than Mr. Anchoester's or mine own!" answered the young East Indian, reverently, "and a hope—a hope—"

"A hope that has found realization," said Lady Redwoode, comprehending the unfinished sentence, and holding Hellice still more closely and lovingly. "I owe you my life, my child. But for your wish to visit the spot where I was supposed to be drowned I should have fallen a victim to the cruelty of my enemies!"

"There is one thing I must explain, dear mother," said Hellice, with agitation. "It will clear away the last cloud between us. I refer to my presence in your chamber that night—"

"I do not desire any explanation. I cannot listen to one. I suspect the truth, but I cannot bear that you should vindicate yourself to your own mother!"

"I must explain, dearest mother," said Hellice, gently, but firmly.

She narrated the events of that night which had sent her forth from Redwoode, a homeless wanderer. She did not spare Cecile now—the false and treacherous Cecile, who had since aimed another deadly blow at the Baroness—but told the entire story frankly and unreservedly.

While these explanations were progressing the grey dawn began to be flushed with the banners of the approaching sun. The flushes deepened and the sun arose, brilliant and unclouded, from the sea, transforming the dew-drops on the trees and blades of grass into glittering diamonds, arousing all the life, beauty, and splendour of a summer morning in the country.

"The sunshine has broken forth at last," said Lady Redwoode, in a thrilling voice. "No more shadows for us, my darling!"

Hellice comprehended the words in their double sense, and echoed their meaning.

Lady Redwoode's head being unprotected from the sun, the trio resolved to wait where they were for the return of Mr. Haughton. The interim was occupied with farther explanations and thanksgivings, and all were surprised at the speed of their messenger, when, at length, a double-seated, open carriage came up, with a driver on the box, and Mr. Haughton seated in state on the front seat, surrounded by miscellaneous packages.

Leaving the vehicle and its driver at a little distance beyond earshot, Mr. Haughton alighted and approached the group, his arms full of bundles, and his face radiant with a consciousness of duty well performed.

"I've got back," were his first words, meant, probably, to relieve their minds of any doubt on the subject. "I think that the ladies had better keep themselves veiled, for the people at the village suppose her ladyship drowned, and they'll raise a tremendous hubbub if they find she's alive. I've brought bonnets and veils and shawls," he added, complacently, throwing down his burthens. "I had trouble enough to get them, and nearly frightened a haberdasher out of his senses, by knocking him up before daylight. There! how do you like that?"

He displayed his purchases one by one, proving himself to have possessed very good taste in his selections.

Lady Redwoode laid aside Hellice's Indian shawl, and threw about her a light soft Saxony one, of a pale grey hue, selected the plainest bonnet, a thick, large veil, and declared herself equipped.

Hellice took the remaining veil, thus easily satisfying her wants. The other requisitions, Mr. Haughton, in a liberal spirit, bestowed upon the driver.

The four then entered the carriage and were driven to the village. It was an hour or two after broad day when they entered the inn yard.

The landlord was in waiting to receive them, and the party were ushered up to the rooms which Mr. Haughton had prudently engaged. A parlour and bedroom were assigned to the ladies on one side of the hall, and two bedrooms were assigned to the gentlemen directly opposite.

The four, however, entered the little parlour, where a neat breakfast, spread out temptingly, awaited them.

"The coffee, toasted muffins, and hot chickens will be up directly, sir," said the landlord to Mr. Haughton, with a curious side-glance at the veiled ladies. "Anything more, sir?"

Mr. Haughton replied in the negative.

The landlord withdrew, and Lady Redwoode and Hellice entered their little bedchamber, bathed their faces and smoothed their tresses, soon returning to the parlour, where they were joined by the gentlemen, whose toilets had also been renovated.

The promised delicacies were steaming on the table with appetizing odour. The party sat down to their repast, but had scarcely taken their seats when an irascible voice was heard in the corridor, crying,—

"Here, some of you rascals! I thought I ordered my breakfast at half-past six! It is seven o'clock—"

"I ought to know that voice!" exclaimed the Baronet. "It is Mr. Kenneth's."

"He's the individual then I robbed of his

breakfast, I suppose," said Mr. Haughton, coolly.

Sir Richard sprang up impetuously, rushed to the door, and encountered, as he expected, the old lawyer in the passage.

"Sir Richard Haughton! You here!" exclaimed Mr. Kenneth, in astonishment.

"It seems so, Mr. Kenneth," said the Baronet, gaily. "We have robbed you of your breakfast. Come in and share it with us."

"I am in no mood for unseemly gaiety," responded the old lawyer, incensed at the unrestrained joy and delight beaming from every feature of Sir Richard's fine face. "I have come to this place on a sad errand, Sir Richard Haughton. Although you seem already to have forgotten the terrible fate of Lady Redwoode, my heart is too full of mourning for it to indulge in laughter!"

"I know it, old friend, I know it," said the Baronet. "But Hellice is with me here!"

The lawyer took a step towards the parlour.

"I should like to see Miss Hellice," he said, "but I should be only a cloud on your rejoicing. I cannot forget so soon—"

"Can you not comprehend why I am smiling and glad?" asked the Baronet. "You remember what is said about he that was dead is alive again—I am too happy to quote correctly. You mourn Lady Redwoode dead! I rejoice with Lady Redwoode living!"

Taking the arm of the astounded lawyer, he drew him into the parlour, into the very presence of the Baroness.

Then followed a scene of the wildest rejoicing.

Lady Redwoode gave her hand to her faithful friend, and he covered it with kisses, so delighted that his character as a staid and sagacious lawyer was well nigh lost for ever.

He seemed like a man beside himself with joy, and was only brought to himself at last by a series of grave rebukes from Mr. Haughton.

"I was as much surprised as you are, Mr. Kenneth," said Mr. Haughton severely, "but I did not permit my enthusiasm to run away with my wits. Here is breakfast waiting—and, if I mistake not, you are the same gentleman who was nearly injuring one of the unfortunate servants of this inn for being behind time with your food. 'I'll just ring for an extra plate. Take your seat, sir!'"

A species of order being thus established, the breakfast proceeded. Explanations were made again over the coffee.

Mr. Kenneth was informed that Hellice had been recognized as the true and only daughter of the Baroness, and he gave his cordial and hearty approval to the recognition.

Sir Richard explained the cause of Hellice's presence in Lady Redwoode's chamber on the fatal night preceding her expulsion from Redwoode, and Mr. Kenneth declared that it was plain that Cecile had been the guilty one.

He added that his sister had suffered from an attack of indigestion at the time she fancied herself poisoned, subsequent similar attacks having proved the fact.

The guilt of Mr. Forsythe and Cecile was then discussed, and the lawyer said,—

"We must go back to Redwoode this very day. That impostor must be driven from her position as mistress of Redwoode. If we could only prove that Hellice is your child, dear Lady Redwoode!"

"I know she is," said her ladyship, quietly.

"My knowledge is sufficient for me!"

"But Cecile has been acknowledged already. If we only had proofs!" sighed the lawyer. "Let us trust that something may occur to give your convictions weight in the eyes of the law. If that old Hindoo would betray herself, for of course she knows which of the two girls is her own grand-daughter!"

"She knows, and so do I!" said Lady Redwoode, brightly. "We will go home to-day, as you say, Mr. Kenneth. What will Cecile and Andrew say when they behold me alive? What will Cecile say, when she knows her guilt discovered, and her identity known?"

(To be continued.)

FACETIÆ.

SHE: "Why, Charlie, what a pile of letters! *Billets doux*, I suppose?" He: "Not at my time of life, dear. *Billets* overdue."

"You don't call on Miss X. any more?" "No." "What is the trouble?" "Oh, I don't like her father." "You don't like the old gentleman! Why not?" "Well, you see, he's such a kicker."

GENTLEMAN (by request of lady): "Conductor, put this lady off at the next corner." Polite New Conductor: "Xcuse me, sir; seems as how she's a-behavin' herself; don't seem no occasion for proceedin' to 'xtremes.'"

"Did you ever see an elephant's skin?" asked a school examiner of a class in natural history. "Yes, I have!" shouted a restless boy at the foot of a class. "Where?" asked the examiner. "On an elephant in the circus," yelled the boy.

"This 'ere animal," said a showman, "is a leopard. The ancients thought he couldn't change his spots, but it's now known that he sleeps in one spot one night, and in another spot the next night, and is all the time a-changin' his spots."

An editor recently published a leaded editorial on the "internal use of water." He had just discovered by personal experiment that water can be drunk without fatal results following. This discovery has caused great excitement in the town.

HUSBAND: "I can't stand this any longer. You make me desperate." Wife: "So you have said before." Husband: "I'm going into the next room to kill myself." Wife: "The spare room! Oh, dear no! If you want to kill yourself the yard is plenty good enough."

A SCIENTIST remarks that there are forces in nature that never sleep. Yes, that's true—and they won't let anybody else sleep, either—that is, I have been told so. Some say insect powder will kill 'em, but Jones, who has fought through many wars, says the only pop-sure thing is to burn up the bedstead.

A SCHOOL-TEACHER asked a new boy, "If a slater wants to cover a roof fifteen feet wide by thirty broad with slates one foot broad by two long, how many slates will he need?" The boy took up his hat and slid for the door. "Where are you going?" asked the teacher. "To find a slater. He ought to know that better than any of us fellows."

An engineer on the Great Western railway exacted from his wife the promise that she would always signal from a particular window of their little house as his train went by, and ever since he has always seen the fluttering kerchief. But the other day the train happened to run by slowly, and he saw—a dummy, in a familiar gown, leaning against the window-casing, with a dishcloth pinned to its sleeve!

"HAVE you heard the news?" she queried, as they stood waiting for the car. "Something special?" "I should say so! Mrs. Blank, of our street, is to have a new seal-skin this winter!" "N-o!" "True as you live! Isn't that awful?" "Well, I should say it was, and I won't rest until I have my husband examine the county records, and see if they have mortgaged their place. I must have something to take her down with the first day she wears it."

NO CHIROPODISTS IN STOCK.—Recently a lady, who is visiting a friend at a pleasant country town, had occasion to drive to the capital city in quest of some very thin stockings, which would enable her to break in a pair of new shoes, as she suffered badly from corns. Entering a shop, she asked for stockings, and then inquired, casually, "Have you any chiropodists here?" "No, ma'am," replied the clerk, regretfully, "but I can show you some very nice ones in lime-thread and balbriggan." She bought.

FREDERICK THE GREAT.—"My wife," said Fred, the other day, "always flatters me in cold weather." "How is that?" "Why, whenever she wants more coal put on the fire she points to the fireplace and says, 'Frederick, the Grate!'"

"Is poverty a disease, a crime, or a fault?" asks an esteemed contemporary. Now, there isn't much sense in a discussion of this kind, but how very human it is. When a man has a severe cold he spends three times as much time trying to guess how he got it as he does trying to cure it.

"Didn't I hear you say, pa," said a young hopeful, "that there was always room at the top?" "Yes, my son. There is always room at the top." "All right. I should like to know how much room there is on top of a lightning rod?" "Just room enough for the lightning to strike, my son. Climb up."

AN EXPERT OPINION.—"When do you think the moon is at its loveliest, George, dear?" she asked. George, dear, stole his arm, and a cautious glance around the immediate vicinity, and whispered, "When it is behind a cloud, love;" and they were as happy as if they had each taken a hypodermic injection of morphine.

BUSY FATHER: "My daughter, I must take an early train to-morrow; the alarm clock is out of order, and someone will have to sit up so as to wake me." Dutiful Daughter: "I'll do it, pa." "My dear, you are a daily and hourly blessing to me. Are you sure you can keep awake?" "O yes; George will be here to-night."

"Sir," said a gentleman in a crowd, "do you know that you are pushing me unnecessarily?" "Sir," said the gentleman addressed to the party immediately behind him. "Do you know that you are pushing the gentleman ahead of me unnecessarily?" Then he turned to the first speaker and said, "I've passed it down the line."

"SOLOMON said," remarked the dominie, as he carefully trimmed a broken switch four feet long, before going into committee of the whole on the state of the country, "Solomon said, 'Spare the rod and spoil the children.'" "Yes," said the trembling minority member of the committee; "but see what awful children Solomon raised." And while the master thought and thought and thought the minority went out to revise his report, and forgot to come back.

A CANDIDATE FOR THE LUNATIC ASYLUM.—A stranger walked into an hotel the other day, and after registering asked the clerk if he could have room No. 8. The clerk looked at him curiously, and asked him why he preferred that room. "Why, I have some important matters that I wish to meditate and reflect over." "But what has that got to do with the number of your room?" persisted the inquisitive clerk. "Oh, it's sort of appropriate, don't you see? I wish to have room 8 because I wish to ruminate." "H'm!" And then the stranger was shown to the room without further question.

NOT MUCH.

He winked to a bootblack to step into a doorway near the post office, and then confidentially remarked, "Sonny, the postmaster and I don't hitch very well, so I don't care to go in and see about my letters. Suppose I give you a shilling, and you go in and inquire for a letter for Claude Melnotte, and if you get one bring it here."

"Not much!" exclaimed the boy, as he drew away.

"But why?" "Because I worked that racket for a fellow about a month ago. They passed out a letter, and I had just grabbed it when an old duffer grabbed me. 'Write love to my daughter, will you!' he bellowed. 'Want my Nellie to elope with you, eh? Ah! I'll k-rash you!' And he walloped me with a cane until I had to ride home on a dray. No, no; Claudy—I've learned something new."

BOBBIE was reading history aloud to his mother. He came to this paragraph: "The sharpshooters concealed in the copse kept up a gallant fire on the enemy's skirmish line." "What is a copse, Bobby?" asked his mother. "I expect it's a policeman, ma."

"Some infernal old idiot has put my pen where I can't find it," growled old Asperity this morning, as he rooted about the office desk. "Ah—ah—yes; I thought so," he continued in a milder tone, as he hauled the writing utensil from out behind his ear.

"Some good rich land up here in the woods," we said to the driver of the coach. "Yes, we can raise almost everything up here," he replied. "Is there anything you can't raise?" "Oh, yes, indeed. I've had a mortgage on my farm for the past ten years, and I can't seem to raise that."

WHILE arrangements were being made for a party a few evenings ago, a lady present innocently inquired, "Is the invitation to embrace the young ladies?" "Oh, no," replied a young man; "the gentlemen will attend to that." And the young lady wonders what the young man meant.

"HELLO!" exclaimed a giddy little comet disporting itself in the milky way, "who are you, anyhow? I don't believe I've seen you in these parts before." "No," returned the stranger, "this is my first appearance here. I'm the top plume of a lady's theatre hat. The hat is just below here a little way."

A PATRIOTIC Hibernian, after listening for some time to a recital of Irish bulls amid general laughter, cried, indignantly, "Faith, Mr. A., an' do you know what I think?" "Why, indeed, what do you think, Mr. D.?" "Shure, sir, and do you know that I think, indade, that not more than one-half those lies they tell 'bout the Irish are true." This was unanimously pronounced the best bull of the lot.

OCCASIONAL Churchgoer (to minister): "It was good advice you gave this morning, Mr. Goodman, about laying up treasures where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves can't break through nor steal." Minister (earnestly): "It was, indeed, sir, and I trust you will profit by it." "I intend to. Every farthing I can get goes into land. Moth and rust can't hurt land, and no thief can steal it."

"My dear," remarked Mrs. De Wiggs, at the breakfast-table this morning, "Dr. Lewis says that hot water will cure all diseases." "He does, does he?" said Mr. De Wiggs. "Yes; and persons who use the treatment ought never to be ill at all." "Well, I don't believe it." "Why?" "You know how ill I am all the time." "But you have never tried the hot-water cure." "What! never tried it!" ejaculated De Wiggs, as he sidled toward the door, "Why, I've been in hot water ever since I married you." He got outside just in time to miss a teacup fired at him as a parting salute.

PRECISE.

One day a boorish client entered a lawyer's office and found him writing. The stranger took a seat, and after informing the lawyer that he had come to consult him on a matter of some importance, observed, "My father died and made a will."

"You say," remarked the lawyer, writing steadily, "your father died and made a will." "Yes, sir, my father died and made a will." "Humph!" still writing and paying no attention.

"I say, Mr. Call, my father died and made a will."

"Very strange!" writing and not noticing his client.

"Mr. Call, I say again," taking out his purse and placing a fee on the table, "my father made a will and died."

"Oh, now we may understand each other," said the lawyer, all attention; "your father made a will before he died. Why didn't you say so at first? Well, now, go on, let's hear."

SOCIETY.

The infant daughter of Prince and Princess Henry of Battenburg, was christened at Balmoral on the 23rd November, being named Victoria Eugenie Julia Ena. The ceremony, which took place in the drawing-room of the Castle, was conducted in accordance with the Scottish Presbyterian form of baptism, the officiating clergyman being Dr. Cameron Lees, of St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

The service was strictly private, the only Royal personages present being the Queen and Prince and Princess Henry of Battenburg. Several of the Royal servants witnessed the ceremony. The Queen held the infant Princess while the ordinance of baptism was administered. The water used was brought from the River Jordan, and was made a present to Her Majesty for the occasion.

On Saturday morning, the 12th November, the old colours of the 1st Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment having been presented to the Prince of Wales by Colonel Massey and the officers of the regiment, His Royal Highness was present at the "laying up" of the colours in Sandringham Church. The regiment was represented by Colonel Massey, Lieutenants Chater and Tonge, and two non-commissioned officers.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN, notwithstanding the extremely unfavourable weather, fulfilled her promise by attending at the People's Palace, East-end, and opening the chrysanthemum show in the adjoining building. The Princess was received at the entrance to the Palace by Sir Edmund and Lady Currie, Sir Owen Burne, Prebendary Harry Jones, Rev. E. H. Hoskyns, Capt. Burne, Mr. and Mrs. T. Dyer Edwards, and Mr. Ernest Flower, and conducted to the Queen's Hall, where the boys of the Palace Technical Schools sang the National Anthem.

The organ presented by Mr. Dyer Edwards was used for the first time on this occasion. Dr. Bridge, of Westminster Abbey, presiding. Princess Christian was afterwards conducted to the flower show, and upon returning to the hall Madame Riechelmann sang "The Better Land." The Princess then declared the exhibition open, and three cheers having been given with true East-end heartiness, Her Royal Highness retired.

The marriage of Mr. John Herbert Dudley Ryder, eldest son of the Hon. Henry Dudley Ryder, with Miss Mabel Smith, youngest daughter of the Right Hon. W. H. Smith, M.P., was recently celebrated in Hambleden Church, near Henley-on-Thames. The Hon. Randolph Tollenache attended the bridegroom as best man, and there were ten bridesmaids. The bride, who was led to the altar by her father, wore a beautiful dress of white duchesse satin, draped with point de Venise; veil to correspond, wreath of orange blossoms, and pearl ornaments. Master Jack Codrington attended the bride as page.

The bridesmaids were dressed in white faille trimmed with swansdown, and each wore a pearl and diamond heart-shaped brooch, and carried a bouquet of red and white flowers, the bridegroom's gifts. The service was fully choral. The ceremony over, the wedding party drove to Greenlands, where Mr. and Mrs. Smith received a large party of relatives and friends at breakfast. Among those present were His Excellency the Turkish Ambassador, His Excellency the Roumanian Minister and Princess Gluca, the Earl and Countess of Harrowby, Viscount Cross, Lord and Lady George Hamilton, Lord and Lady Archibald Campbell, and many more. In the course of the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. John Dudley Ryder left for Sandon Hall, the seat of the Earl of Harrowby (uncle of the bridegroom) in Staffordshire, where they will pass the honeymoon.

STATISTICS.

JAPANESE RAILWAY STATISTICS.—According to the report of the Japanese Railway Department, the total mileage of railways constructed and brought into working order since March, 1869, is 370, of which 209 miles are Government property, and 161 miles belong to private companies. The total sum actually expended on the lines in operation amounts to £4,365,417, of which £3,379,420 were spent in Government lines, and £911,445 in private lines. The net profit obtained on the former was 6·2 and upon the latter 10·26 per cent. In both cases the working expenses are the same, viz., 45·3 per cent. of the gross earnings. The cause of the better result obtained in respect to private lines is that these have been constructed at much smaller expense than the Government roads. The average cost per mile in the latter was nearly £16,000; that in private roads, £5,302. In both cases the roads were constructed by the Railway Department, the private company supplying the funds until the line was in working order. The cost of construction of the two earliest Japanese railways averaged £29,164 per mile, while the cost of the latest line was only £4,048 per mile. The Minister points out that this is purely due to unavoidable initial expenditure in connection with any enterprise. Railway work in Japan is now being carried on by Japanese engineers wholly without foreign assistance. During the three years ending 1886 the rate of construction was 61 miles annually, and during the three years prior to 1868 it was 36 miles; before 1880 it was only 5 miles, and before 1877, 9 miles per annum, showing enormously increased activity since 1880.

GEMS.

THE world will not come to the church to be saved; the church must go to it.

A GRACEFUL presence bespeaks acceptance, gives force to language, and convinces by looks.

BLESSED confidence of childhood—religion itself has no profounder lesson—no more eloquent attestation of the first cause.

MAKING FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.—An act by which we make one friend and one enemy is a losing game, because revenge is a much stronger principle than gratitude.

A MAN is the happier for life from having once an agreeable tour, or lived for any length of time with pleasant people, or enjoyed any considerable interval of innocent pleasures.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PUFF PASTE WITH OIL.—Shred good beef-suet very fine, then pound it in a mortar, adding olive oil, drop by drop, until it is a mass of the consistency of butter; make the puff paste with this precisely the same way as with butter.

POTATO TEA-CAKES.—Mash a pint of potatoes through a sieve, so that they may be very fine; mix with them an ounce of butter, one teaspoonful of baking-powder, one tablespoonful of sugar, an ounce of flour, a little salt, and one egg, well beaten; mould into one flat cake, bake very quickly, split and butter while hot, then cut into three-cornered pieces, and serve.

KIDNEYS AU GRATIN.—Cut the kidneys across, but do not separate them, remove the hard part, skewer them open, season to taste, and pass them through warm and melted butter, then sprinkle thickly with freshly made and seasoned breadcrumb, and broil over a clear fire. When cooked the crumbs form a crust, or gratin, over the upper side of the kidney. If necessary, pass a hot shovel over the crumbs to brown them, and serve with *maitre d'hotel* butter.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FURTHER remains of the ruined walls of Jerusalem have been found by Russian excavators on a piece of ground recently ceded to the Greek Church. The discovery is specially interesting, as the remains show vestiges of the old gates, through one of which, it is asserted, our Saviour was led to Calvary.

THE want of occupation is no less the plague of society than of solitude. Nothing is so apt to narrow the mind; nothing produces more trifling, silly stories, mischief making lies; when everybody is occupied, we only speak when we have something to say; but when we are doing nothing we are compelled to be always talking, and of all torments that is the most annoying and dangerous.

THE DATE HARVEST.—Egypt is the favoured country of the date, and it is said that more than two millions and a half of palms are there registered as fruit-bearing trees, and as a single tree will sometimes bear as much as four hundredweight of dates—quoted last year at fifty shillings in London, but this year, from over-abundant supplies, not worth half—it may be seen what an important matter to the Egyptian fellah is his date harvest.

MR. EDISON is now at work producing electricity from coals, and has invented a special machine for this purpose—the pyromagnetic-dynamo. The American inventor wants to turn coal into motive-power without the mediation of steam, and points out the ruinous waste of the energy in coal which is generally lost in the chimney. Mr. Edison asserts that by adopting his plans a steamer would only burn 25 tons of coal daily instead of the present rate of 150 tons.

IN all talk about persons, it is their merits that we should hasten to disclose, their good deeds that we should gladly unfold. In all discussion on character, the good should come into prominence. In all our uttered hopes for the future, our highest ideals should receive the emphasis. Truth, and not error; light, and not darkness; love, and not hate should be our themes. So may we increase and perpetuate all that is good by frank utterance, while evil will decrease and disappear under the thick drapery of silence.

PRETTY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TABLE.—Autumn leaves are very effective in the decoration of the table. In country houses sometimes the dinner-table is adorned entirely with leaves of various kinds and colours, arranged in low glass or china receptacles, and laid in regular designs on the cloth, in and out of the dishes, or in a long pattern down the centre. The small, square, fancy brocade cloths are occasionally seen in the middle of the white table cloth, under the flower receptacle, and edged with flowers, or three smaller ones are laid on, point touching point, diamond fashion, going lengthways. Gold coloured Roman sheeting, brocade or plush, with a bordering of brown leaves and some pink flowers, has a beautiful effect, and so has silver gray, with a design of tinted bramble or other leaves, and a few sprays of maidenhair. Flowers plucked from the parent stem, such as geraniums, &c., and laid on the table, connected by small sprays of asparagus run to seed, or small leaves, look bright; but, to be in correct taste, they should correspond with the flowers in the vases. The asparagus should be pressed first, so as to lie flat on the table. Sprays of dried and flattened passion flower and other creeper leaves, also ferns, last the whole winter for table and wall-bracket decoration, and look well with dried feathery grasses when flowers are no longer to be had; scattered rose petals in designs, also small house-leeks, have decorated fashionable dinner-tables. Clusters of tinted leaves, hanging climbers, rushes and grasses are much in vogue for wall brackets and vases.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. W. S.—Tuesday, July 7, 1863.

N. P. B.—We do not think either would harm your complexion.

M. R.—You are not alone in your appreciation of the story named.

E. C.—If you think you ought to apologize, do so frankly and fearlessly.

J. P.—If there be such a word it is used in medical science, but we have never heard of it.

L. R.—Settle the domestic wrangle among yourselves; outside mediation seldom avails in such cases.

MAUDE.—A marriage license would cost £2 2s. 6d. Marriage in a Register office would be considerably cheaper.

FRRIEND L.—1. Nitric acid is the best remedy for warts. 2. Moles cannot be removed. 3. Wear gloves constantly. 4. Very fair.

MRS. LANOTRY.—They could be made to pay with interest, but imprisonment would depend upon whether they could be convicted of fraud.

NESTA.—1. It would tend to do so. 2. Not by any means. 3. Very good and quite suitable. 4. Any good instruction book contains plenty.

DAINTY DAISY.—1. You write a fair hand, quite suitable to business, and should be rather firm in disposition. 2. The 27th of September, 1871, fell on a Wednesday.

A. A.—1. The Prince's title would probably be either Albert I. or Albert-Edward I. 2. The Princess of Wales's hair is dark-brown. 3. See answer to Patience Kate. 4. Rather firm and regular.

INDIGESTION.—1. Yes. 2. Spread it across the lap and use it as occasion requires. 3. Not unless caused by intemperance or indigestion. 4. Let her try and better herself. 5. It denotes a rather strong mind.

PATIENCE KATE.—The wedding ring has been used from time immemorial. 2. Tincture of cantharides and sweet oil is a simple stimulant for the hair. Any chemist will make it up for you in the proper proportion. 3. We are sorry we cannot oblige you.

F. A.—Wood, steel or copper engraving is a most excellent trade, requiring from five to seven years' apprenticeship before the numerous technicalities can be mastered sufficiently to command living wages. A boy possessing artistic taste should find no trouble in learning either branch of handiwork.

A. B. H.—Hemming attachments for sewing machines are obtainable from persons dealing in those useful household articles. The hemmers are made in such a manner as to produce a wide or narrow hem, according to the wish of the operator. Business advertisements in the shape of addresses are not given in this department.

G. R. T.—The reason for associating auburn-haired damsels with white horses is "one of those things no fellow can find out," although there have been several explanations of its origin, none of which, however, can be looked upon as trustworthy. Generally speaking white horses are beautiful, so are red-haired girls; ergo, it doubtless arose from a natural association of the beautiful in nature.

P. F.—Lalla Book is the heroine of the immortal poem bearing her name, written by Thomas Moore in 1817. According to the poem, she was the supposed daughter of Aurangzeb, Emperor of Delhi, and was betrothed to Alirza, Sultan of Lesser Bucharla. On her journey from Delhi to Cashmere she was entertained by Feramorz, a young Persian poet, with whom she fell in love; and her delight was unbounded when she discovered that this poet was the sultan to whom she was betrothed.

R. B.—An odometer is an instrument for determining the distances passed over in travelling; also known as pedometer, perambulator, &c. Odometers attached to the wheels of carriages were employed by the ancient Romans. This kind of odometer records by a mechanical contrivance the number of revolutions of a wheel in passing from one place to another. The odometer carried by pedestrians, and designed for recording the number of steps, is generally called a pedometer. It resembles a watch in size and shape, and may be worn in the vest pocket. Its machinery is so constructed that by the rising and sinking of the body with each step a lever is made to vibrate, which moves the index hand connected with it.

C. C.—Perfect cleanliness, which is best attained by constant brushing with water and soap or tincture of myrrh, is the best preventive of decayed teeth. For corns paint with tincture of iodine, and wear easy shoes. Freckles can be removed by lemon juice, butter-milk or a weak solution of corrosive sublimate in rain water. It is "not improper in amateur theatricals for a girl to dress and act as a man," but certainly much pleasanter to dress and act as a woman. Seventeen is our guess for your age; and your writing and spelling are good, the latter indicating decision. Grey eyes, brown hair, small features and red cheeks should make you quite pretty. Let your projecting ears alone. Anything that would flatten them might injure your hearing, besides it is thought to be a mark of musical ability to have them project. Dressmaking, millinery, telegraphy, wood-carving or type-writing are all good occupations for young women.

A. F. M.—Magnificent penmanship, indicating great force of character.

C. B.—Two of the dates—March 26, 1846, and September 19, 1876—fall on a Thursday; December 25, 1872, on a Wednesday.

B. C. G.—Your spare moments can be profitably and pleasantly employed in the practice of penmanship and the study of grammar.

W. T.—We keep no records of murder cases. Perhaps some of the municipal officers of the place mentioned may be able to enlighten you.

A. F.—"Love Me Little, Love Me Long," and "It is Never too Late to Mend," are the titles of two novels written by Charles Reade. He died April 11, 1884.

B. C.—Being more than twenty-one years of age, you are free to act in the matter, and your relatives cannot forbid the marriage with the lady. They should prove the gossip reports to be unquestionably true before condemning her.

L. K.—Authors should put their names and addresses on manuscripts forwarded to us, placing them on the first page of each, as well as giving them in the letter accompanying the package. What we pay for literary material is a matter of private import, not intended for public use.

G. N. B.—The question of shaking hands upon introduction is one that must be decided by circumstances. In a mere casual or accidental presentation simply bow to man or woman. If a stranger is presented in your own home always offer the hand, as do also if the presenter is a friend of your friends, or a person of whom you have heard from them—that is, to his credit. Twenty-four inches waist and thirty-six bust should give a fairly symmetrical figure. Your writing is good, and indicates an even temper.

IS IT FAR?

Is it far to the river?
Oh, traveller, say!
For my feet they are weary,
And dark is the way.
The clouds they have hidden
Each radiant star;
O! tell me, I pray,
Is it far?

Is it far to the shore
Where the river I ford?
May I journey by faith?
May I trust in His word?
Shall I soon see the place
Where the sanctified are—
The fair Eden land—
Is it far?

Is it far to the city
Whose streets are of gold?
Whose treasures are boundless,
Whose joys are untold?
Where the beautiful gates
Of the saints are ajar,
Where my soul may have rest—
Is it far?

M. K.

C. T. R.—If a mutual confession of love and the acceptance of an offer of marriage does not constitute an engagement we are at a loss to understand what possibly could do so. The gift of a ring is altogether optional, although most usual, and the length of the engagement a matter regulated wholly by the convenience of the parties to it. A girl is of legal age at twenty-one, just the same as a man, and in all matters of contract her own mistress.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—Don't you think your trouble originates with your being too fond of admiration, too fond of accepting attention from all men who may be attracted to you by your coquettish manner? If you wish to "marry well," as you say, is it good policy so to cheapen yourself? Instead of coming to the city with a vague idea of getting something to do, better content yourself in your village home and fix your wavering heart upon the steady, industrious young man whom you have known from a child. It is probably your disposition to flirt that has estranged him in a degree. Be more choice about your associates and correspondents. Your letter is very well as to handwriting, but defective as to grammar. For instance, you say "I written to him," for I wrote. You can say "I have written," and "I have seen," but never "I written," or "I seen."

L. D. G.—Ducking for apples set adrift in a large tub of water is one of the time-honoured Halloween customs practised in Great Britain. Another source of merriment consists in hanging up a stick horizontally by a string from the ceiling and putting a candle on one end of the stick and an apple on the other. It is then made to revolve rapidly, the company in succession leaping up and snatching at the apple with their teeth (no use of the hands being allowable). It very frequently happens that the candle comes round before the person is aware of the fact, either scorching his face or smothering him with a copious coating of grease. Such misadventures naturally cause an abundance of laughter, and admirably serve the purpose of whiling away an hour or two. Acting charades on words suited to the occasion will also furnish much amusement for the assembled company, who should be supplied with an abundance of apples and nuts of all kinds.

W. T.—No fault can be found with your penmanship or spelling.

L. M. C.—The 17th of April, 1860, fell on Tuesday, and the 20th of May on Sunday.

S. C. M.—Send the wedding present directly to the young lady at her own house with your card.

G. R. V.—Write no more letters to this gentleman. He has no sincere regard for you. His behaviour was not gentlemanly.

M. S.—Coloured cotton goods that have had ink spilled on them should be soaked in lukewarm sour milk; in a short time the stain can be easily washed out.

B. P.—Vaseline or cold cream applied to little pimples will relieve the accompanying pain and heal the parts. The pits caused by pressing out flesh-worms will close up naturally, without treatment.

M. M. C.—Greece may be taken out of velvet by pouring a small quantity of turpentine over the spot: then rub briskly with a piece of clean dry flannel. Repeat the application if necessary, and hang the article in the air to remove the smell.

L. W.—Here is one way of making sweet tomato pickle: Slice two gallons of green tomatoes in a kettle, and then add one pint of vinegar, two pounds of sugar, and mace, nutmeg and cinnamon to taste. Put on the fire, heat slowly to a boil, and simmer one hour. Put up in glass jars. Ripe tomatoes are generally preferred in making this compound.

B. L. L.—A high forehead indicates (phenologically) plenty of reverence and also self-esteem. The curl inclosed is pale golden-brown. Dark and light blue, apple, and sea-green and heliotrope colours could be worn by a person having such hair and fair complexion. Impossible to tell the young man's disposition from the colour of his moustache and complexion. Good and bad qualities do not show themselves in hair and skin, and we are not a necromancer. You write nicely—a little too many flourishes.

L. D. C.—July 1, 1874, was the day upon which Charley Ross, the four-year-old son of Christian K. Ross, of Germantown, Pennsylvania, was abducted. For several years this case excited universal interest, because of the audacity of its conception, the long and persistent but fruitless search after the boy, the communications received from the unknown abductors, and other features that tended to give it such unusual prominence. The two principals in this noted crime were killed in December, 1874, while attempting to commit a burglary.

E. V.—Strict etiquette requires that a lady, meeting in the street a gentleman with whom she is acquainted, shall give the first bow of recognition. Good sense, however, does not insist upon an imperative adherence to this rule. A well-bred man bows and raises his hat to every lady of his acquaintance whom he meets, without waiting for her to take the initiative. Consequently in a case where a gentleman meets a lady acquaintance whom he has not seen for a long time he will be committing no breach of etiquette should he accost her without previous recognition.

B. C. W.—Dr. Franklin, when he was a young printer, in Philadelphia, formed the first reading club in America in a very simple way. He persuaded some of his acquaintances to bring their books to a room that was provided, so that every member of the club could have the advantage of reading books which he could not afford to purchase. From that simple beginning there grew up one of the greatest societies of the kind in the world. You can imitate Dr. Franklin's example. Begin your reading club in a simple and inexpensive way, and adopt such rules and regulations, from time to time, as experience shall show that you need in order to have it work successfully.

L. L.—Grease spots, if not made by mineral oil, may generally be removed from silk, woolen, cotton or linen cloth by simply using soap and water and a nail-brush, and afterwards wiping off the latter with a wet towel. When this fails, cover the spots with French chalk, scraped to a fine powder; lay a piece of brown paper over them, and on this set a warm iron. This will melt the grease, and the chalk will absorb it, and the whole may then be removed by brushing. If this does not remove the grease spot, repeat the process. Or, the French chalk may be mixed with lavender water, or with benzine, so as to make a paste, which may then be put upon the stain or grease spot; over this lay a piece of blotting-paper, and run it over with a hot iron; then brush off the chalk. If French chalk cannot be obtained, common chalk will answer, but it is not so good.

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!t! We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

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